

**Impact of Institutional diversity on unions and NGOs' efforts
to represent and articulate farm workers' grievances:
Case Study of the 2012 Western Cape farm workers' strike
and protest action.**



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Abstract

Following a disconcerting pattern in South Africa's recent labour history, a violent strike and protests gripped the De Doorns area in the Hex Valley River Valley of Western Cape Province in the late months of 2012 and early 2013. Literature on collective action and mobilisation shows that many of these incidents are triggered by occasions where there is a clash or disagreement of interests between groups. The existence of groups with diverging interests creates the basis of conflict; this dichotomy is the initial form of diversity. Through debunking and qualitatively analysing the role and responsibilities of the worker representative groups during the strikes, the study reveals that there is a weak representation structure which is worsened due to the diverse interests of the institutions. This ultimately negatively affects the process of attaining a practical solution for the farm workers' issues. The paper explores the layered disparities of the workers within the farms, showing that a group's view is an aggregation of individuals' different opinions and experiences; this is important to acknowledge in the study of conflict. This dissertation is a presentation of the need for an adoption and inclusion of institutional diversity in the study of labour conflict in South Africa. Racial lines prominently draw diversity within a South African setting but this study proposes that diversity in other forms is crucial in understanding these protest situations and in seeking solutions. The paper makes this suggestion through an observation of the 2012 Western Cape Farm Worker Strike and protest action, by questioning how worker representative groups handled the responsibility of representing and articulating farm worker problems. Although each party may believe they are doing what is best for the farm workers plight, they each have different operational values and they strongly embody their own interests. This varied mix of agenda's and modes of operation leads to a lack of constructive dialogue. This break in effectual communication plays a role in weakening the representational abilities of the unions and organisations and consequently abates the possibilities of attaining the practicable resolutions which are best for the group that the parties claim to represent; the farm workers. The paper identifies this as a problem and subsequently suggests an immediate evaluation of communication methods from all these parties in order to improve negotiations in the future. This thesis not designed as a solution but functions as a presentation or a sketch of the complex milieu that surround strikes and protest action in order to encourage new ways of thinking about farm disputes and ways to resolve them.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
BAWUSA	Bawsi Agricultural Workers Union of South Africa
BAWSI	Black Association of the Wine and Spirit Industry
BFAP	Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
ESTA	Eviction and Security Tenure Act
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers Union
FRRP	Farmworkers' Research and Resource Project
FMSP	Forced Migration Studies Programme
PASSOP	People Against Suffering, Suppression and Oppression
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
SASRIA	The South African Special Insurance Association
SPP	Surplus Peoples Projects
SAFE	South African Fruit Exporters
UCT	University of Cape Town
ZDP	Zimbabwean Dispensation Projects

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a familiar concept to human society. The rudimentary fact that we exist in a system that recognises some groups as dominant over others because of certain values such as cultural and financial capital, race, gender and affiliation to a country, renders society vulnerable to situations of disagreement. Modern South African history saw the death of 44 people due to conflicts in the violent strike at the Lonmin's Marikana mine outside Rustenburg in 2012. In this year alone, to the economic detriment of South Africa, a total of 99 strikes were recorded, the most grave being the Marikana strike because of the high number of fatalities. There are many damaging effects of strikes, with some staggering statistics; 181 deaths in the last 13 years because of strike action (SAPA, 2013). Of that number, 3 deaths occurred in WC farm worker strike. Other non-death related issues included the closing down of clinics because of not wanting to endanger health care workers during the Western Cape (WC) strike. Children not attending schools in fear for their safety, SASRIA (The South African Special Insurance Association) received its biggest claim, R70m for damage to a warehouse and vineyard, since it was established in 1979. According to SASRIA (Integrated report, 2013:38) there were considerably high claims in property damage for three major events last year, included the mining strikes (R53-million), the truck drivers' strike (R65-million) and the Western Cape farm workers' strike (R160-million). Wage strikes of such magnitude foster a loss of appeal for foreign investors and could consequently slow economic growth for South Africa. There is evidently a need to continue and further the study of labour strikes in South Africa in order to cease such costs to the society and its economy. Varying organisations, NGOs and other institutions are involved during these conflict institutions, in order to control and seek solutions to these strikes. There is a general sense of emergency in South Africa that these strikes are destroying the economy.

This view is not shared by all, Steven Friedman argues that the strikes were exaggerated, and expresses this in his article entitled *"Strikes are not about to destroy our economy"* in

Business Day. His standing argument being that the strikes “were based on fantasy”, he reports that an analysis done by two economists from UCT (University of Cape Town), Bhorat and Tseng show that “while panic emerged last year, the difference over the past couple of years is not great enough to alter their conclusions” (Friedman, 2013). The article follows to explain that in comparison to other nations, South African strike levels are low in terms of countries whose growth rate are admirable.

Bhorat and Tseng in Friedman’s article (2013), calculate that “in 2011, only 0.13% of working days were lost to strikes. In that year, about 2% of our workers were on strike. Even if strike levels in the past two years were treble those in 2011, we would still be losing less than half of 1% of our total working days to strikes, and only about one in 16 workers would be striking in any year.” Could the panic about strikes be truly unjustified? This thesis does not argue that the recent frequent strikes are not a reason for ‘panic’ but does propose that because of the varying nature of role player’s agenda, involved institutions, to further their own plans manipulate some instances. The media play a catalytic role in such situations.

Bhorat and Tseng delve into this deeper and present an interesting theory, which revolves around Cohen’s social theory of “Moral Panics”. Using this theory, the hysteria about the strikes is not seen as a reaction to reality but rather a “moral panic”, the term used to describe a belief that some people and their actions are a threat to society’s “values and interests”, as Stanley Cohen, one of the academics who pioneered the term, put it. Panics happen, he wrote, when some people who influence public opinion decide that others, who he called “folk devils”, are a threat to the social order (Paton, 2013).

The theory of ‘moral panics’ shall be explored further in chapter two, as it functions as a view to the importance of understanding the relationships between the different actors in order to source out the effects of their interactions.

In spite of this view as presented by Friedman, the culture of striking has made its mark on the South African workforce as all but the finance industries were affected by strikes last year (2012). It is a reality. In a nation that is riddled with high unemployment, low economic growth and inadequate labour regulation systems it is without a doubt that, in employment spaces where collective bargaining is not an easily available option, one of the greatest challenges is finding a mechanism which allows for effective communication and

negotiation between employers and employees. This voice has been found through the practice of violent strikes and this pattern continued into late 2012 with the Western Cape farm strikes which began in November of this year. The agricultural sector like many others in South Africa was affected by the strike wave, but this sector functions differently to others because of the unique relationship between workers and the expected role of the employer.

1.2 Purpose and Relevance of Study:

This unique association renders the workers' families' lives and wellbeing vulnerable to the rules stipulated by their terms of employment. The strikes are evidence of an imbalance in this relationship in which the workers are at a considerable disadvantage. Triggered strikes such as the Marikana and the 2012 Western Cape farm worker protests, a new urgency has been recognized by the academic community to understand the causes of this disharmony in the rural settlements in South Africa;. After 20 years of democracy, there is evidence that this sector still functions within the skeleton frame of apartheid dogma.

Current studies being conducted by Surplus Peoples Projects (SPP) and Centre for African Studies (CAS) seek to "look at the conditions of farm workers and dwellers with specific reference to the recent developments in the WC which were sparked by the historic strikes of 2012" (SPP, April 4 2013). The key questions being discussed are "what do the strikes signify, can they be sustained, what are the chances of these spreading to other parts of the country and are there prospects of rural urban alliances". CAS at UCT in 2014 (August) will host an international workshop which will reflect on South Africa's land and agrarian questions after the advent of democracy in 1994. CAS invites research that covers a whole range of themes in this field and is another example of the need for fresh debates in the contemporary agrarian scholarship. This too was a reaction to the 2012 Western cape farm worker strike and attests to the problem that after 20 years of market-led land reform and 20 years of democracy in South Africa, land and agrarian questions still remain unresolved" (CAS, 13 Jan 2013).

The purpose of this study is to further the investigation into answering some of the questions of the agricultural sector in South Africa. The strike is a symptom of a distressed sector and it is imperative to understand the circumstances surrounding the protest action.

This thesis brings a focus on two aspects, the impact of the diversity of workers within the strike and of the worker representative with the purpose of shedding light on the effect of variance in mobilization of groups during conflicts, in seeking solutions and on the consequent results. Diversity in workers is greatly seen in the differences of their nationalities, which has been a cause for xenophobic attacks in De Doorns.

There is a great deal of literature on labour migrancy in South Africa, as well as on collective violence and strike action. However, nothing digs into the social effect that foreign nationals have on strikes. Does the existence of different ethnicities influence the living conditions on the farms? Could it be a source of unhappiness and disharmony? Seeking an answer to this, lead to the exposure of the need to a deeper more imperative question about institutional diversity in conflict situations.

Thus, this dissertation not only touches on those questions about diversity of workers but furthermore uncovers the need to understand diversity in social dynamics on a macro level. It does not limit its scope to the diversity of the farm workers, but extends it to the key role players who influenced the strike and its results due to their own diverse agendas. It is important to appreciate the significance of social influence and group membership in decision making. With farm workers, the illusion is of a homogenous monolithic group. Diversity plays a vital role in the farm areas that lacks exploration through research. Premier Helen Zille (2013) aptly explains this when she says, “and, as happens world-wide in situations of conflict over scarce resources, individual’s band together in groups to protect and advance their interests. In divided societies, the fault line between groups is often determined by ethnicity. Here there are four distinct groups of seasonal work-seekers on the Province’s deciduous fruit and grape farms: Zimbabweans, Basotho from Lesotho, amaXhosa and traditional Western Cape farm workers, who would (in terms of the old apartheid designations) have been classified Coloured.”

The assumption is of a homogenous workforce; however, there are factors, for example; the different national histories of the locals and the migrants that influence their decision and need to strike. In South Africa, a young democracy, the wounds of apartheid are still healing

for many black South Africans - a position that migrant workers may not relate to. Where local workers may feel the need to strike against a white employer, representing black consciousness and freedom; a migrant worker may feel that it is a major risk to their job; ultimately undermining what the Black South Africans feel they deserve. One of the aims of this thesis is to explore the existence of tensions and establishing the possible impact, they have on conflict. This conversation is a step towards understanding the social dynamics on farms that do not suppose a completely unified force but contextualises each worker's situation.

The main aim of this thesis as aforementioned is to draw attention to the need of utilising institutional diversity as a tool to study and understand situations of conflict. In current South African research, there is a dearth of information on diversity in labour conflict that is not drawn along racial or gender lines, in a country that is labelled the "rainbow nation". It is imperative to appreciate that when various parties interact, there are diverse interests and agendas which need to be taken into consideration when giving a comprehensive overview of an event.

The research is important because it adds to the body of existing research that was done on the strike in De Doorns. De Doorns was the epicentre of the strike and it is essential to gauge what conditions were in play in the moments that led to the strike.

Finally, the study's significance is evident in the fact that it revolves around a historical event in South Africa's agricultural sector. On March 1 2013, Mildred Oliphant announced the new legally enforced national wage of R105 a day. There is a need to understand the situations and actions that lead to this significant change of the Sectoral Determination, resulting in an increase in wages for farm workers all over South Africa; effectively altering the economics of farming in the nation forever.

1.3 Agricultural sector in South Africa: Grape Farms

The South African farming sector is very reliant on manual labour and is one of the most labour intensive globally. When comparing to the other countries; Japan uses 4500 tractors for every 100 km² of arable land, compared to 270 in the USA and only 43 in South Africa

(BFAP, 2012). Commercial farms are a fundamental part of rural economic activity, where the agro-industrial sector comprises about 12% of national GDP and the success of this sector heavily impacts the food sustainability, employment and social stability of its residents. As is characteristic of a capitalist economy, in their attempt to keep costs of worker social maintenance low, farmers find the cheapest ways possible to cut costs and this is often to the disadvantage of the employees' socio-economic status. One of these cost-cutting methods is the dependence on cheap unskilled labour which has been historically emblematic of the South African Agricultural sector. This mode of operation however is changing, in recent years there has been an increase in the mechanisation of farms and thus a reduction in the use of human manual labour. The workers required to stay are more skilled and pay more which depletes jobs for many of the population that live in the farm areas. The problem is not an immediate threat for permanent workers; it is the seasonal workers in the wine farms who inevitably face more urgent unemployment during this transition and this was reflected in the 2012 WC strike. Only 15% to 20% of the workers that went on strike were permanent workers, Ehrenreich (2013) states "the majority were seasonal and potential seasonal workers and other protesters were people who are unemployed and live in those communities." These seasonal workers comprise of a variety of nationalities, the differences in nationalities have proven to be a source of tension in the rural settlements. The social dynamics on the farms are altered by the variance of these workers and could function as a basis for increased stress.

1.4SOCIAL DYNAMICS on the Farms

1.4.1Diversity of workers:

'Those Foreigners': MIGRANT FARM WORKERS in SOUTH AFRICA

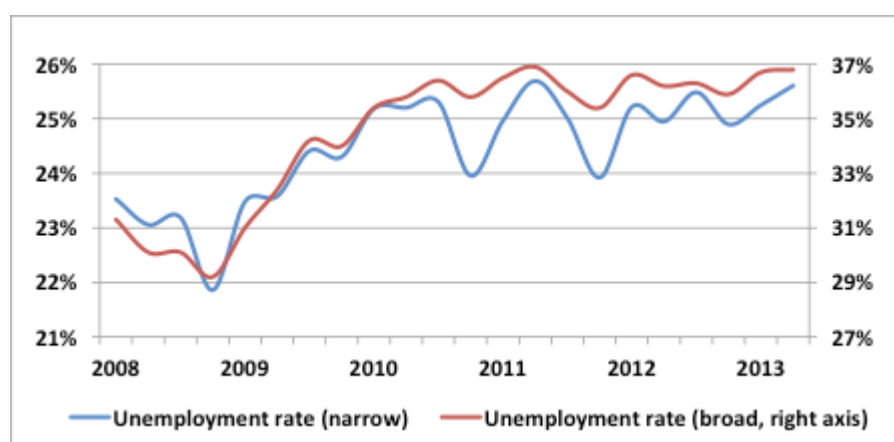
There are four distinct groups of seasonal work-seekers on the Province's deciduous fruit and grape farms: Zimbabweans, Basotho, amaXhosa and traditional Western Cape farm workers, who would (in terms of the old apartheid designations) have been classified Coloured.

"South Africa is faced with a threat, and that is the SADC ideology of free movement of people, free trade and freedom to choose where you live or work. Free movement of persons spells disaster for our country.... We

cannot feed the population properly as it is, leave alone persons from across our borders.... If we as South Africans are going to compete for scarce resources with millions of aliens who are pouring into South Africa, then we can bid good-bye to our Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)" (Buthelezi, 1997 in Sachikonye, 1998; ii).

This anger is not unwarranted; competition for jobs is strongly undesired by the millions of unemployed South Africa citizens. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the 2nd quarter of 2013 revealed that South Africa is nearing record-breaking unemployment rates for the country. The statistics show that the number of people out of work, between two groups: the unemployed people and the discouraged work seekers; has risen above seven million. The economy is creating jobs but the number of people seeking and needing jobs is rising at a faster rate. The graphs below show how the unofficial unemployment rate rose to 25.6%, while the broader rate of unemployment rose to 36.8% in the 1st and 2nd quarter of 2013.

Figure 1, percentages of Unemployment. QLFS 2013



The issue of foreign workers in South Africa has been one of major causes of social angst as is witnessed in the two well-publicised xenophobic attacks of 2008 and another attack in 2009 on Zimbabweans in three informal settlements (Ekuphumleni, Stofland and Hasie Square) located in Ward 2 of De Doorns, Breede Valley Municipality, Western Cape (FMSP, 2009). This forceful displacement of 3000 Zimbabweans from their shacks in De Doorns between 14 -17 November 2009 is an example of this angst. Two of the respondents in this

study experienced the assault and expressed their grief as they were forced to either be beaten or leave their homes behind. The FMSP (2009) recorded that “While the displaced initially sought protection at the De Doorns police station, they were moved to a local sports field (Hexvallei Sportklub) on Wednesday, 18 November as numbers increased. Shelter and humanitarian assistance were provided at the sports field and many Zimbabweans remain there at the time of publishing this brief (12 December 2009)”. Two farm worker respondents in this study confirmed that they remained there for as long as a year.

The 2009 attack focused on the rural farming areas, whereas the 2008 violence was concentrated mostly in the urban informal settlements. The accusation being that these workers are stealing jobs that rightly belong to the South African citizens. This ‘injustice’ was marked as one of the significant causes for the brutal xenophobic attacks that occurred in 2008.

Although not being expressed as brutal a manner as in 2008 or in 2009, xenophobia still exists in South Africa and to this day xenophobic related violence is witnessed throughout the rainbow nation. Zimbabwean foreigners who seek asylum and refuge are often subject to much abuse by various government organisations and some from the South African police who feel that ‘there is no war in Zimbabwe and therefore these foreigners should not be in the country’ (Kriger and George, 2006:8)

Although immigrants from other parts of Africa are often subject to discrimination and hostile social environments, foreign migrant labour is a sizeable proportion of the labour force on farms. As stated by Zille (2013), it is the only sector that still allows for a large number of unskilled labourers. The number of both documented and undocumented migrants has been increasing since South African independence in 1994. Reasons for this include the attractive nature of the dominant South African economy as compared to the rest of African counties.

With the deteriorated Zimbabwean economy since 2000, Zimbabweans are the biggest group of foreign Africans in South Africa (Kriger and George, 2006:8). The search for dependable livelihoods is not the only reason foreigners flock to South African farms. The

proximity of some of the farm areas to borders makes it easy for foreigner nationals to boarder jump and to seek employment.

Akin to the Zimbabweans, Sothos have valid reasons to seek employment opportunities in South Africa. The first reasons being related to Lesotho's geography; Lesotho is completely land locked by South Africa. It has the largest degree of land erosion, lowest proportions of arable land available to a country and on the land that is arable; it has a high population density (Neocosmos, 2010:36). In addition to these features, Neocosmos mentions the institutional factors which are characteristic of Lesotho, including the 'neglect of infrastructural development in the rural sector' (2010:36). These people are in search of greener pastures and hope to find it on South African farms, but are subject to different treatment because of their places of origin.

The diversity of the grape farm workers based on nationality consequently leads to different living and working conditions. Many of the seasonal workers who are from Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Transkei are not privy to the benefits and better living conditions accorded to the permanent workers; who are mostly local South African workers.

The workers are also segregated through their legal statuses which differ depending on nationality. The Zimbabwean Dispensation Projects (ZDP) was implemented by the South African Department of Home Affairs between September 2010 and December 2010 with the aim of regularising the stay of undocumented Zimbabweans in South Africa. This permit allows workers to legally reside in the country for up to four years. Hence some workers (Transkei) do not need permits as they are South African, Zimbabweans can easily acquire permits while others, Basotho, do not have.

Oberschall (1973:17) rightly notes that the influences that occur in a group or a collective setting are not random processes. Within the collection, members, including the managers, interact more often with each other than they do with those from outside their circle. It is expected that on the farms, some will be bonded through ethnicity, through language similarities and gender. In South Africa, a nation hostile to foreigners, people of the same nationality will identify with each other more. On farms this may, or may not be the situation, which is an aspect that this thesis explores. How do these dynamics play out when looked at through nationality diversity as a lens? It is important to appreciate the

significance of social influence and group membership in decision making, not the homogenous worker that is often discussed.

These dynamics are emblematic of the diversity that is existent on the farms, and in moments of crisis, some of these differences have an effect on action and processes of the group.

Although there were potential points of tension caused by the diversity of workers on the farms, the strike was predominantly the outcome of a disagreement between the farmer and the farm worker. As these two actors seemingly exist in sphere where for one to prosper; the other needs to compromise. By understanding this relationship, the dissertation shows that this relationship has been marred by decades of inequality. The laws and ways of life governed by apartheid have definitely left their mark.

1.4.2 The farmer - worker relationship

South African agricultural sector bears a historic hostility between farmers and farm workers, which includes the land issue and black and white relations. Ehrenreich notes that “good relations between farmers and workers are the exception” and this hostility can be traced back to the days of exploitation, where workers were partly compensated for their labour with alcohol, this was called the dop or tot system. Although this system was outlawed in the 1960’s, it was still widely practiced until independence in 1994 (IRIN news, 2013)

The dop system entrenched an identity relation of slave and master, where the farm worker is reliant on his farmer ‘master’. The existence of the laws of Apartheid, further created a divide between the farmer and the worker, as racial lines were drawn and black workers, and to a lesser extent, coloureds (for lack of a better term) were exploited and ill-treated. This dynamic has plagued the Western Cape farm areas for many years after apartheid and although unhappy, workers continued to accept this routine.

This reliance is not only unfavourable to the workers, but to the farmers too. The agricultural sector is the only sector which greatly expects employers to guarantee the social security of its labourers who dwell on the farms. It is this fact that cultivates the most tension; the difficulty in striking a balance between the need for employers to take care of

their workers without compromising profits. There is a tacit obligation, established by decades of farming systems, placed on the farmer to take care of his workers. It is often the farmers' responsibility to ensure that workers' children have access to education and that the spouses are taken care of. This pressure is almost always insisted without the consideration of the farmers' expense concerns as a person running a business.

1.4.3 The Dilemma:

The strike occurred even though the workers in the fruit farms of the Western Cape Province earn higher than the minimum wage, yet in farm areas, elsewhere the strike pattern was not initiated. A report by BFAP (Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy) revealed that many permanent workers generally earn comfortably over the minimum wage, but the situation differs for the seasonal workers who earned around R84 in comparison to the R69 that was stipulated before March 15 2013. Although these workers receive more than those in other provinces, it is not enough to sustain their families, which workers feel is the responsibility of the farmer.

The fact that an increase in wages would result in loss of revenue budgeted to cover the farms other costs of production but even so, this increase would not be enough to adequately sustain the workers' well-being. An analysis by BFAP (2012) explains that an increase by an average of R20/day (i.e. to R104 per day- which is close to what the new minimum wage is), means many of the typical farms will be unable to cover their operating expenses, and therefore be unable to return the monies they have borrowed or afford entrepreneurs remuneration. The report goes on to state that even with the increase of the minimum wage to R150 per day, as was demanded by the workers, most of the households would still not be able to provide the food with the nutrients that would make them food secure. This is the financial reality of the sector; the worker frustrations were ultimately expressed through the strike and amplified by the unemployed protestors. The strike was a warning that changes need to happen in the sector.

1.5 STRIKE OVERVIEW:

This section will merge the overlapping agreements in stories told by the various parties about the strike. This is in order to provide an objective opinion about what the various institutions found to be the common highlights. The media report differing opinions, which although bearing truth, may reflect a sensationalised view of one group's viewpoint.

The strike began on a farm in the De Doorns area and was a result of the deep discontent felt by the workers over their wages and poor living conditions. The initial strike was on a farm comprising of a majority of female workers. This first strike was a success as the workers received the increase in wages they wanted from the labour brokers. This ignited a pattern throughout the rural areas of the Western Cape, where other workers joined in the strike and complained about the same grievances, which are largely related to the conditions that are a consequence of their poor wages and existing poverty. The strikers and protestors barricaded the highway that runs past the township and altercations occurred between them and the police. The self-organised strike took on the most violent form in early November, causing the destruction millions of Rand's worth in property.

The workers' demands became more specific, in November; the demand was made that the minimum wage for farm workers be increased from the then current R69 to R150. Other demands included the end to piecework and to the use of labour brokers, which were seen as not caring for the well-being of their employees. Another request was for a moratorium on evictions which had plagued South African rural farm areas for the past few years. The evictions are identified as a major cause for unhappiness as they resulted in the creation of the poor settlements.

The strikes created an environment for prominent trade union officials and local politicians to take part in the dispute. This in turn created an environment for them to drive their personal agendas and use the milieu to raise their unions and political party's profiles. The strikes began as self-organised, but a power shift was seen from the workers to the entrances of the union players, COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) and BAWUSA (BAWSI Agricultural Workers Union of South Africa). The unions thus became the 'face of the strike' influencing the strike in powerful ways.

The unions influence is evident, as the strikers heeded the warning given by COSATU to go back to work. Several times the strikes were suspended in November by particular union officials. Officials such as general-secretary, Nosey Pieterse, of BAWUSA, gained significant presence amongst the farm workers because of his involvement with them in dealing with eviction cases in the past. Activist Nosey Pieterse, along with COSATU regional general, Tony Ehrenreich, quickly became prominent features in the strikes and their roles overshadowed that of the workers and the initial committees that had been formed. Nosey reports that the two had a good relationship throughout the strikes and BAWUSA and COSATU worked together in most situations during the strikes bar one. These roles were escalated and established the media, which swiftly identified them as the unofficial spokespeople of the strike.

The farmers, through AgriSA refused to reach any settlement that would see the raise in minimum wage. In January 2013, COSATU called off the strikes. Tony Ehrenreich stated "on the advice of workers, we are calling off the strike actions in all areas, so that workers can evaluate the victories that they have gained, and plan more carefully for the way forward."

The success of the strikes is questionable, although the farm workers received a 52% increase; the consequences were not as favourable. New fees were introduced, such as rent, transport and electricity on farms where those services were once free. Other farms experienced immediate retrenchments as farmers felt that they could no longer afford to keep the same number of farm workers with the new wage. Although weak, the success of the strike can be seen by the fact that there was an increase of the minimum wage for farm workers. Success of the strikes and protests can be measured by the way that it drew more attention to the desperate need to reevaluate the situations in these areas. The cries of the workers did not go unheard and many organisations and academic institutions are seeking ways to prevent conflict of such magnitude on the Western Cape farms. This is partially done by understanding conflict situations better, the next chapter focuses on theories of group mobilisation and highlights theories of diversity in conflict.

CHAPTER TWO:

Theories of conflict

The following sections cover a literature review of some of the theories that have been presented on mobilisation of groups, conflict, social movements and violence. It predominantly utilises sociologists Oberschall and Coser to explain the dynamics of social conflict. Hypotheses by these two authors were influential in the later theories discussed by more recent authors in the understanding of group behaviour. Secondly, the literature review follows with a brief discussion of reasons for violent behaviour in strikes and applies the proposed theories to a South African civilisation. The literature highlights diversity as a theme in order to understand its influence in the strike from a theoretical perspective.

2.1 Clarification of key concepts:

For the purpose of clarity, words that we ordinarily take for granted such as conflict and collective behaviour have to be defined. These are the terms that have been identified as imperative to accurately understanding this research.

Institutional Diversity: Elinor Ostrom (2005) emphasises the importance of understanding institutions, their development and their impact on decision-making and resource use. Using the Ostrom understanding of institutionalism, institutional diversity embraces the problem of heterogeneity and its consequences in relation to institutions (Aligica: 2014). Institutional diversity steers away from the limits of models and theories that are based on homogeneity as a prominent factor in understanding problems. The thesis understands institutional diversity to also mean the differing values and operational methods of institutions.

This perspective, as shall be seen in the dissertation recognises that diversity of institutions, influences collective action and human behaviour. Using this approach, the interactions of various institutions is essential when studying conflict situations.

Conflict: Early sociology saw conflict as action that is part of everyday existence and a regular part of social reality. Weber (1747:132 in Coser) defines it as a form of action that involves the defying the wishes of others in favour of carrying out one's own will. This is a simplistic version of conflict as a concept. Coser (1967:232) gives a more apt definition, "social conflict may be defined as a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflict groups are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals". This definition is more applicable to the more common understanding of what conflict is today. The key aspect to be understood in both versions is that conflict involves a situation where there is a clash between two parties/ actors with differing interests. Oberschall (1973:30) modifies Coser's definition by highlighting that the aims of conflict groups are to either gain their desired interest where the opposing group gain nothing, secondly to either injure or neutralise the interests of the other group such that neither wins. This is a common scenario witnessed in situations of labour dispute, management does as best as it is possible to neutralise or at least 'injure' the requirements of the workers so as to meet them at a point that still partly serves their own interests. Conflict is expressed in many different ways as an expression of grievances, rebellions, insurrections, social movements, revolutions, strikes and the list goes on. In all of these situations, there is an adoption of a behaviour that is not considered the norm, and when this form of behaviour is performed by a group, it becomes collective behaviour.

Collective Behaviour: The Chicago school places collective behaviour within the idea that it is an integral part of society as it functions as an expression of a broader form of change within the society (Turner in Oberschall, 1973:14). Oberschall (1973) uses their definition of collective behaviour as a means to study the relatively unstructured social situations and their products, in the form of riots, crowds and rumours.

Collective behaviour is characterised by 'behaviour which is not fully controlled by cultural norms', this is witnessed in events such as strikes. Order is displaced by mayhem, what may have been deemed unacceptable is replaced in this new law. Most strikes, or groups that are born out of a situation of conflict, exist in order to bring about social change (Oberschall, 1973:15). A strike, or an act of collective 'misbehaviour', instigates a response, which often

creates new perspectives, new institutions and new lines of action (Oberschall, 1973:15). The amendment of the sectoral determination by Mildred Oliphant, to raise the minimum wage is one such example. A change is not only seen in the wage increment but in the way farm workers' lives and living conditions are viewed, a new perspective has been adopted that is sympathetic and cognizant of the farm workers plight. Collective 'misbehaviour' is part of everyday society and is needed to bring about social change.

2.2 Literature Overview

McCarthy and Zald (2006) define social movements as mobilised or activated demand for change in society. For decades researchers have sought to understand and explain why people mobilise. Developed during a period of heightened activism and social movement participation in America, a significant theory is the Resource Mobilisation (RM) one which attempts to explain this.

The crudest version of the RM theory states that mobilisation occurs due to frustration or deprivation (McCarthy and Zald, 2006). This is a candid case for the WC farm worker strike. The strike broke out on a farm in the Hex Valley region due to the fact that the women workers were frustrated with the conditions that had been changed by the new owners SAFE (South African Fruit Exporters). This deprivation of basic good working conditions is one of the factors that lead to the women striking.

Literature on social movements and protests shows that many of these incidents are triggered by occasions where there is a clash or a disagreement in interests between groups. Often strikes and conflict situations are instigated by the group or population that is disadvantaged as a way to fight the controlling group. Although reasons for striking and protesting can vary drastically, the common denominator is that it is used as a vehicle for change. In some instances, this is successful and positive change occurs for the previously disadvantaged group but in others, the consequences of such action results in increased tension between the protestors and the hegemonic group.

There are many theories that attempt to explain how it is so that people can come together and be involved in conflict situations in order to attain a common goal, Oberschall and Coser being some of the earlier theorists. A pattern is observed with many of these theories; they

often work under the supposition that these people in a group are one monolithic entity. Firstly, using Oberschall's theory on social movements, the following section explores the various tenets that are at play in the formation of groups. This understanding proves that the individual within a group, and their unique social context contribute significantly to the creation of a whole.

Oberschall's- Empirical Analysis of Action:

Oberschall (1973) states in his book *Social Conflict and Social Movements* that action in a situation such as a striking group, is an individual making a choice or a number of various choices between several options, which all exist within a group context. "Larger societal or group effects are produced by aggregating individual choice; these include the past history, the preferences, and the values of a particular individual can be empirically measured and are conveniently captured in the notion of "intention" or "predisposition"" (1973:17). He goes on to explain that the pressures one feels from the group, the information they receive, restraints and rewards that a decision maker faces are captured in the concept of influence. He very precisely and well states that "the complex interaction between predispositions and influences then produces the probabilities or rates of alternative outcomes of the choice process, of the action" and follows to ask the relevant question "how do broader cultural trends, historical traditions, and differences between communities enter the analysis, and what is their impact on the choice process?" (1973:17).

This notion of an aggregated individual choice explains why within groups, there are some fractures, based on nationality, job type and individual priorities. The group however is formed because the individuals realise that to attain their personal goals, there is more power in numbers.

Oberschall identifies three other concepts that are important to understand when explaining the conditions that make social conflict possible.

The first is ***Social Conflict and the Social Order***.

Here he states that “social conflict arises from the structured arrangement of individuals in a social system.” It gives room for one to be exploited and for the other to dominate (1973:33). This structure is not enough however; the social order has to rest upon social differentiation and the division of labour. It is the division of labour that creates complexity in the relationship when satisfaction is not achieved in the exchange between the differing social positions (Oberschall, 1973:33). As is proposed by the RM theory, Oberschall refers to the problem of the distribution of resources. It is the people who are in privileged positions that are in control of these resources. He explains to be privileged as having “the good things that are desired in life”, and resultantly “the social positions and relationships that assure their [privileges] continued enjoyment are not given up without resistance” (Oberschall, 1973:33).

In the case of the farmer and the farm worker, the privileged is the farmer and one resource that is vital is money. By asking the farmer to pay higher wages; the worker takes away the benefit of turning higher profits, this is something ‘which is not given up without resistance’.

The second concept is ***dimensions of social conflict***:

This theory utilises the format of the game theory because of its usefulness in “uncovering the structure of a great variety of conflict situations without regard to what the substantive issues are or who the opponents are” (Boulding and Rapoport in Oberschall, 1973:49). There are two main types of conflict generalisations which are useful to consider when analysing levels of intensity in societal conflict. There is a difference between conflict that is fought over basic principles and personal values, and other kinds of conflict such as issues over the control of material resources (Coser, 1956: 73). One would assume that the conflict over personal values would incite greater hostility but a discussion by Coser (1956) and Oberschall (1973) argues otherwise. In Coser’s words (1956:118) “conflicts in which the participants feel that they are merely the representatives of collectives and groups, fighting not for self but for ideals of the group they represent, are likely to be more radical and merciless than those that are fought for personal reasons”. Conflicts of such nature are

usually difficult to solve and there is no simple way to have an outcome that satisfies both parties, albeit partially. This is different from the second generalisation, which is conflict over material interests, such as higher wages for farm workers. In such a scenario, both conflicting parties can gain “a piece of the pie without either group getting the entire pie” (Oberschall, 1973:50).

“One would expect that conflict over economic goods and over resources and benefits that can be measured, to be more amenable to solution than noneconomic conflicts over social status, civil rights, religious freedom, prestige, symbols, morality and principles” (Oberschall, 1973:52). A situation like the WC farm worker dispute should not present a structure for conflict that resolution rests on a zero-sum game. Where the interests of the two conflicting parties are diametrically opposed, when one player wins, the other payer loses in totality what the other player has won. In a situation that is non-zero sum, the interests of the two parties, partially coincide. The sum of the payoffs of the possible outcomes does not inevitably add to zero (Oberschall, 1973:52). The expectation is a compromise between the farm workers and the farmers in which both parties partly win but are also left at a disadvantage.

The final concept to be discussed by Oberschall is ***Institutional Strengths and Weaknesses***.

It is useful to take note of this theory as it further affirms the effect and impact diversity has in the conditions that lead to social conflict. – This theory discusses the *heterogeneous vs. homogenous nature of society*, what he calls institutional strengths and weaknesses. It declares that depending on the institutional and social structure of a society, the likelihood of conflicts differs. He states (1973:64) that “a historical general observation is that societies that are heterogeneous from the point of view of ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic and cultural are more likely to be the locus of all manner of discontent and conflicts and these conflicts are more likely to take on a violent manner than in societies in these characteristics”. He explains that when two or more different groups of people are placed into the same social system, whether by coercion or by voluntary means, they may meet and have common interests but they will naturally adopt a structure that is unequal. They may come to terms to accommodate the other groups and may benefit each other in some ways but it shall not necessarily be equal (1973:65). This can be said of the various groups

that dwell on the farms where people are ranked by geographical origin, national identity and job type. These differences can function as a cause of tension; however, this was not the case in the 2012 WC farm worker strike. The workers showed a seemingly united front when they mobilised and put down their tools. If the striking group was functioning as a unit, why did the strikes turn violent? The next section is a discussion on the various elements that attribute to the eruption of violence in strikes and attempt to explain why the 2012 WC strikes took on this non-peaceful form of protest.

2.2.2 Violence in Strikes

Brief Discussion on Why Strikes Turn Violent

The resource mobilisation theory bases its argument on this premise of deprivation as a direct source for mobilisation and participation. However, one can question that if deprivation is a trigger for social movements, should the number of strikes not decrease as society becomes more affluent? The Western Cape is known to pay the highest wages in the farming sector, but it was the region that experienced the violent strikes.

Grant II and Wallace (1991) present one of the earliest and little research work that has been done on causes of violence among groups. Their work uses empirical evidence to try and explain strike violence in advanced countries post World War II in a time where workers' interests became institutionalised (Grant II and Wallace, 1991). The sum of the article understands strike violence as related to the features of the socio-political context in which the strikes occur.

McCarthy and Zald in 2006 do well to elucidate this premise which looks at the conditions for the involvement of participants as a great determinant for why strikes turn violent. They speak of the 'Adherent Demand for Participation' and 'Supply of Activist Opportunities'. The former focuses on "how the conditions of work, family, and schooling make classes of potential participants more or less available to invest time and more or less capable of investing material resources in social movement activity" (McCarthy and Zald, 2006: 543). Supply of Activist Opportunities explains that participation is based on the number of

occasions people are asked to participate in protests. This touches on the writings by researchers Michael Wallace and Don Sherman Grant II.

Wallace and Grant II (1991: 1117) believe that the socio-political features which relate to strike violence are “the legislative environment, the skill mix of striking workers, and of great importance, the strategies utilized by striking workers and the counterstrategies used by employers.”

Violence occurs within a scope of organisational and social control variables, in a situation where the partiality of the ‘agents of social control in an intergroup conflict’ is high; there is an increase in violence and casualties just as there is a decrease when an impartial buffer or mediator intervenes in the conflict (Oberschall, 1973:337). This hypothesis strongly supports the argument of this dissertation as it was witnessed in the WC farm worker strike that the involvement of parties with their own prejudiced interests exacerbated and fuelled a situation conducive for violence. Oberschall (1973:337) continues to explain the importance of group diversity and dynamics when he states that “when the confrontation is not directly between the authorities and protestors but between two hostile population groups such as employees and employers, blacks and whites, the casualties tend to be higher if the authorities either openly side with one group, against the other or refrain from intervening in the conflict and thus legitimise and facilitate the actions of the aggressor group.”

This was the case in 2012, although controversially, lines were drawn; the provincial government was labelled as representing the farmers due to the delay in intervention to the strike which could be seen as ‘refraining from intervening’. In the Western Cape the ruling party is the DA and often the distinction between party and state is blurred by the public. The national party, ANC, and its union alliances was labelled and seen as representing the workers. Although the initial trigger of the strike may not have been political, the Western Cape, unlike all the other regions was the susceptible to violent strikes because of its different political environment and the involvement of external parties. This situation is not unique to South Africa, Wallace and Grant II (1991) affirm that several factors at the political-institutional level are important in understanding conditions of strikes and levels of violence. In France violence increased during election period and in Canada, when a pro-labour party is in power, “unruly tactics by workers may increase because the government

will be unlikely to suppress violent actions by their major constituency (Gamson 1975 in Wallace and Grant II, 1991:1126).

Economic factors such as the high unemployment rate in South Africa play a role in incident of violence in strikes. Where one would assume that strikes would be less in such a period because of the need to keep their jobs, it is this desperation that leads to drastic action. This is because depressed labour market conditions favour employers; strikes could drag on indefinitely (Wallace and Grant II, 1991). Employers are able to find alternative sources of labour and during the 2012 strike, farmers on some farms hired temporary workers. This action could make the strikers resort to violent means of protest as they wish to practice every means of power they have.

The aforementioned are not specific to South Africa and are not the only reasons; the history of South Africa lends it vulnerable to violence. The social structure on the farms is akin to that of apartheid, with majority of the farmers being white and the workers black and 'coloureds', a power situation which was adjusted through a violent revolution. Violence is associated with change and is often accepted as a legitimate way to attain results.

Social structures place some categories of people in a space that bars them from legitimate access to achievement and thus when all channels of negotiation have failed. This is what Coser (1976) refers to as 'violence as an achievement'- when all avenues of legitimate channels have failed, violence offers an alternate road to achievement.

2.2.3 Moral Panics

As mentioned in chapter one, Friedman speaks on how the strikes were 'based on a fantasy', this section shall define the Cohen's theory on Moral Panics which Friedman uses to explain why *Strikes are not about to destroy our economy*. Using this theory, the hysteria about the strikes is not seen as a reaction to reality but rather a "moral panic" which Cohen defines as a form of collective behaviour during which:

A condition, episode, person or group emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right

thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnosis and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes visible (Cohen 1972: 9).

Cohen in his book, 'Folk Devils and Moral Panics', touches on the transactional nature of deviants as he discusses Becker's idea of a deviant. Although some people or 'situations' who are labelled deviants may do this with the conscious intention of being such, it does not mean that all are intrinsically deviant. Becker introduces an interesting notion of deviance being created by society but not in the way it is usually understood. He purports "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and by applying those rules to particular persons and label them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act a person commits, but rather the consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender, the deviant is one whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label"(Becker in Cohen, 2011 :5).

The ANC's agenda may probably be the most evident without evidence but works as a good example to attest to this theory's principle. The national government's role is one that is to protect property and the interest of the capitalist farmer as well as maintain peace and protect worker rights as much as is possible. This role is contentious because the state's political interests lie in contention with the provinces ruling party. Stuart Hall (1978) writes moral panics are in fact mitigated and accentuated by the state for political and economic purposes. He writes that moral panic could thereby be ignited to create public support for the need to police the crisis. It can be argued as has been suggested in the interviews, that while in practice DA deployed the police in order to stop the unrest, the political party ANC did the opposite, riled up trouble. Helen Zille (2013) states "the ANC and its various allied organisations were happy to drive the conflict between the Basotho, Zimbabweans, and local labour to extend the unrest throughout rural areas, in their attempts to present the Western Cape as being exploitative, racist, and ungovernable". The various voices and opinions show the needs to realize the value of diverse agendas in times of disagreement.

In such situations, Cohen (1972) purports that the media often amplify this disruption in social order or reinforced by the parties with personal agendas. This panic thus can spiral out of control through what is called deviance amplification, "this is a media hype phenomenon defined by media critics of increasing numbers of reports on a category of antisocial behaviour or some other "undesirable" event, leading to a moral panic."

The media function as the producers of images that are the catalyst to the moral panic. Through the media, the manufacturing of the stigma occurs; it is in this realm that meaning is assigned to these situations of conflict. This is done through the way it is reported and events represented. Hall writes that representation is an essential part by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture, through the use of signs, images and language (Hall, 1997). He presents a more a complex understanding of representation and goes beyond the normative definition. He asserts that representation is part of the event, without representation and meaning assigned to a particular event; the event essentially does not exist. This is because it is without meaning and has occurred outside the process of representation. Using this thought, Friedman's declaration that the strikes are not as dreadful as society is convinced to believe is justified. This theory further shows the influence that external parties play in conflict.

CHAPTER THREE

The research attempts to explore the influence institutional diversity has on the efforts of worker representative groups in articulating and representing worker grievances in the 2012 Western Cape farm worker strike. It does this by seeking an answer to the Central research question of this dissertation: How is the complex responsibility of representing and articulating farm worker grievances negotiated by worker representative groups in the Western Cape? The research aims to fulfil the following objectives; assess the relationships between worker representative bodies, draw out the voices of the different organisations involved in the 2012 farm worker strike and identify opportunities for improvement and change in understanding labour conflict,

3.1 Methodology

It is not a simple task to discuss information pertaining to one's livelihood especially if it is in the context of a conflict situation. The nature of the research required an intrusion into the personal working lives of people and an investigation into issues that could possibly lead to their retrenchment from jobs that they desperately need if answers given were to reach the wrong ears. Thus, this research does not include any farm workers' real names; they signed consent forms to this truth.

The research adopted a mixed method approach within the qualitative paradigm, which consisted of four in-depth semi-structured interviews with Nosey Pieterse, Danie Niemand, Owen Maromo and Rita Andreas. In addition to this, two semi-structured interviews with two different farm worker couples were conducted. One couple was from South Africa and the other from Zimbabwe. The research also utilised secondary research in the form one extensive interview conducted by researcher Ben Turok for *New Agenda* and several other documents submitted by interviewees.

A descriptive inductive approach was adopted in order to allow the research findings to emerge from the dominant themes that were found in the raw data (Thomas, 2003:2). Hence the research, although contains similarities to other strike situations in a South

African context, shall not be generalised as the data was drawn from a small particular section of the agricultural sector.

3.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of methods adopted.

Interviews are the best way to acquire information in this case because they allow for an interpretation and analysis of data through inferences. Wengraf (2001 in Babbie and Mouton) credits interviews as a technique because it uses evidence material as a way to access possible truths from extra-interview realities. The goal of semi-structured interviews is to entice out information from the interviewee that may not necessarily be on the list of questions but is pertinent to the study. The questions function as a guide, but give room to the researcher to probe when a point mentioned seems relevant and worth further exploration.

One-on-one interviews are excellent when dealing with sensitive matters. They are the most productive because they create an environment that is intimate and encourages the respondent to open up. Often some of the respondents would remind researcher that “this is just my opinion” before making bold statements. Had these questions been asked in a large focus group manner, the respondents may succumb to typical group dynamics and not have been bold enough to voice their views. This method is particularly useful in this research as it touches on information that is sensitive to the respondents.

Focus groups do not allow all the voices to be heard as there is a tendency for respondents to lean towards each other in answering questions. The line of questioning will remain in one vein or the opposite, where instead of general agreement; there will be one dominant voice.

This is not to say that group interviews are unproductive. Adopting a focus group method of interviews allows for an environment that encourages back and forth discussions which could be rich in information during analysis. Focus groups also invite insight into what a larger group thinks are the most important issues to be brought up. This differs from one-on-one interviews where the replies are very subjective and based on individual experiences.

The farm workers in this research were interviewed as couples, husband and wife. Although this is not a large group like a focus group situation, other influential dynamics instigated by their marital status may have altered the responses of the interviewees. From an observational point, this however did not seem to be the case during the interviews. The spouses showed comfort ability in answering questions as they were with their loved ones and not alone with a stranger.

The unfortunate and major disadvantage of qualitative interviews in researching is that it limits the researcher to very few respondents because it is time consuming in comparison to quantitative surveys. This consequently means that sample size is not representative of total population and results cannot and should not be taken as representative of all Western Cape (grape) farm workers.

3.3 Sample and Location:

The thesis adopted purposive sampling which is performed when the researcher has a particular focus in mind and selects sample based on knowledge of the population (Punch, 2005:187). Thus, respondents with expertise and direct involvement in the 2012 farm worker strike were selected as key respondents.

Due to the various natures of the role players being interviewed for this thesis, the locations differed. There was a preference given to interview people in their home environments where they felt most comfortable.

Danie Niemand, a Western Cape government employee was interviewed at the Premiers house, activist Nosey Pieterse was interviewed at his Black Association of the Wine and Spirit Industry (BAWSI) offices in Malmesbury and en route to his home. PASSOP representative Owen Maromo and the farm workers were interviewed in their homes in a settlement area in De Doorns. Finally, farm worker and manager Rita Andreas was interviewed at her place of work in Wellington. All locations were agreeable and the interviewees showed a sense of comfort, which lessened rushed answers. The respondents voluntarily chosen as none of them was forced to be part of the research.

Key respondents:

One of the chosen key respondents was BAWUSA and BAWSI leader Nosey Pieterse, he is a great candidate for this position because he was credited as one of the central people that represented the workers and he would know first-hand, the place and role taken by foreign nationals and their participation level. This interview was long, in-depth and semi-structured because the respondent had wealth of information that is related to strikes.

The second key subject is Tony Ehrenreich is the provincial secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions for the Western Cape. At his recommendation, this thesis uses his interview with Ben Turok on January 2013 and this rich interview revealed COSATU's involvement and position in the strike.

The third key interviewee was the Director of Farm Worker Development for the Western Cape Government, Danie Niemand. He provided insights into the role played by the government and provided documents that detailed these activities.

The fourth respondent was Owen Maromo PASSOP representative. He was a good chosen candidate as he was their activist on the ground during the strike and he was a farm worker in the year preceding the strike (2011).

The final key interviewee was Rita Andreas a winner of the Farm Workers competition and art of the Prestige Farm worker group. She was an excellent chosen candidate as she is a farm worker as well as manager; she is well placed in the middle of the two opposing groups. The interview was also long and in-depth.

3.4 Possible problems faced in design:

Bias and Errors: It is difficult for us as humans to study social phenomena and be completely objective. Possible bias in this research may have come from the inherent assumptions one might already have. These assumptions are formed from the information on the subjects as provided for by the media or formulated through social interactions and discussions. The reason for the instigation for the strike is such an example, where the media portrayed one story, which bore fragments of truth but in-depth interviews from participants revealed

another. Such assumptions could alter the way the researcher phrases questions and interprets meanings.

However, the intent for this research was to approach this study in an idiographic manner, allowing for the specific data from the respondents to determine precise results. As the researcher, being a student from Zimbabwe at UCT, not belonging to any particular group from the research, the researcher stood at an unbiased objective position.

Lost Data: Three important interviews (PASSOP activists and two farm workers) were lost due to theft. The interviews were taken again through telephonic means due to budgetary constraints for travel. Interviews that are conducted twice bear a certain loss as the respondents may lack the same enthusiasm they had during the first interview. The interviewer is likely to ask questions that seek to probe into answers that were given in the initial interview and this may encourage leading questions. The advantage of recovering data through re-interviewing is that the respondents are familiar with the questions and have sharper well thought-out replies, the interviews will be shorter and thus avoid the time consuming nature common with one-on-one interviews.

Ethics Appraisal:

The researcher stated to the respondents the purpose of the study to which they signed consent forms. The respondents were also informed that because of the academic research nature of the study results may be disclosed for the purpose of further analysis however, this will not include the use of real names; everything will be anonymous if they so chose to be. The respondents that are named in this research gave permission for their names to be included. No names of farms are listed in this study unless the name had been previously published elsewhere by a research source. The interviewees were not coerced into answering anything they were uncomfortable with. There are no legal considerations expected as respondents are all adults and no laws are being violated through this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS: The Different Voices.

In analysing several interviews and examining the experiences and relations between the BAWUSA, COSATU, Western Cape government and PASSOP, this dissertation will now try to elucidate the findings that reveal the impact of institutional diversity on the efforts made by these bodies in representing farm worker grievances. This section's function is to strictly present the findings in preparation for a deeper discussion and interpretation in the following chapter. The chapter depicts the various experiences of the role players during the strike by illuminating their commendable intentions, the difficulties they face in representing workers and their positions on issues such as violence and social dynamics on the farm. It reveals the side of a small number of workers as they experienced the strike and their opinions. It ultimately aims to aim to highlight the theme of institutional diversity and focuses on the underpinnings of these institutions and how their values are grounded in conflicting ideologies by examining their relationships between each other.

The data in this section shall be organised and presented by institution and/or person of interest to ensure an all-encompassing understanding of the information found on a particular subject.

4.1 BAWUSA- Nosey Pieterse

The lengthy in-depth interview by Revd Nosey Pieterse was vital to this dissertation as he was identified by the media as an influential the voice of the people and labelled as the one driving the protests. He is a controversial figure and a seasoned activist who provided helpful information about on the ground occurrences for the duration of the conflict. He was shot three times during the strike with rubber bullets and believes that the workers made a tremendous sacrifice to get that wage increase and *“for that we [farm workers] will defend that 52% until the last drop of blood (2013)”*. As the founder and president of BAWUSA, Nosey represents the union's voice and is accompanied by documents provided by the union.

Relationship and position with workers: Nosey Pieterse is the activist president of BAWSI (Black Association of the Wine and Spirit Industry) and BAWUSA (Bawsi Agricultural Workers Union of SA). BAWSI is an employers association formed in 1999 with the intension of including ‘people of colour’ into the white run wine industry. Since 1999, Nosey Pieterse's organisation has been working with farm workers and dealing with a variety of problems that they face such as evictions, dismissals, unfair labour practices, development programmes and dealing with cultural and leadership issues.

He states in his interview that it is because of this relationship the farm workers solicited his help, they trust him. His union, akin to all the unions in the agricultural sector represents a small portion of the workers.

Union membership: In response to being asked how BAWUSA can claim to represent farm worker grievances when only 6% of workers being unionised, he responded that he may have X number of workers but he does not only speak for X number workers. His “organisation is the vanguard of farm workers nationally”. After the strike, BAWUSA membership doubled. Before the strike started they had about 3000members, during the strike they had about 6000members, after the strike BAWUSA has 10000 plus members. He says the 5% statistic does not apply anymore. These numbers however are unverified and thus it is unclear whether these workers signed up, paid up or claim membership. He maintains that BAWUSA is very aware of worker problems and in 2011; he tried to warn the provincial government that a strike was inevitable if there was no change in the rural agricultural communities.

Causes of the Strike: Nosey believes that the strike was caused by a deep-seated anger that has been welling up in workers for many decades and chose to erupt then. He shares this passionate anger when he states *“this is the result of decades of anger and manifestations; it was inevitable and none of you wanted to listen to me. Now you run because there is fires burning, but when farm workers were raped and they were forced to suck the penis of a white farmer who is ten years their junior, then they were forced to...male workers, they were forced to masturbate the farmer, all those things you guys ignored, now...now you come”*. He mentions the involvement of labour brokers as a major issue for the workers, who were being taken advantage of. He displayed a strong sense of proletariat solidarity and fully supported the strike, but not the violence.

Although Nosey Pieterse believes striking is a legitimate option and measure of negotiation for farm workers, he does not condone the idea that striking should take on a violent form. The subsequent themes covered directly relate to BAWUSA’s interactions with the other institutions. The following paragraph outlines his thoughts on the involvement of politics in the strike.

Politics: Nosey Pieterse admits *“I am an ardent ANC supporter, having been a member of the underground communist party of the ANC...I will not hesitate to challenge the ANC if I believe that they are out of line when it comes to the issues of the rural poor in general.”* He strongly contends that the strikes had nothing to do with politics unless striking for better wages is political. He believes *“it has nothing to do with party politics, if it was anything; it was working class politics that was the order of the day and not political.”*

In response to the question of why the Premier was chased away if it was not political when she visited De Doorns he confidently responded that it was out of frustration that she was chased away. The DA responded late to the cry of the workers and only came to the farms when it was the farmers who had cried. Nosey exclaimed *“The Premier, Helen Zille, she remained very still, not a word from her during the whole thing, now all of a sudden, when the farmers were crying-this was my problem-when the framers were crying, she runs with four ministers, she runs to De Doorns. I don’t know why, because we were not interested, to listen to her nonsense. Now she hears the cry of the farmer, but she was deaf to the cry of the farm worker, so we said to hell with her and she was chased off”*.

Throughout other interviews such as with the Mail and Guardian (Jan 2013), he maintains that the strikes were not politically motivated.

Relationship with COSATU: There is a good relationship between BAWSI and COSATU greatly founded on the friendship and excellent working relationship between secretary of COSATU, Tony Ehrenreich and Nosey Pieterse. There was only one incident of major disagreement; COSATU was calling off the strikes and BAWUSA wanted to continue. Nosey Pieterse believes that one should not stop fighting until they have what they have set out to attain.

Relationship with the Provincial government (his view on the ruling party’s involvement): There is a poor working relationship with the Western Cape government. Nosey expresses disappointment in their reaction to the strike as he felt they were slow and only came to help when the farmers showed dismay. He provides an example where he wrote a report (to be discussed in the next section) in 2011 to Minister van Rensburg exposing the ‘horrific conditions on the farms’.

Nosey states *“I asked Van Rensburg to come and accompany me on the farm, he said to me it is not time for “Marxism and Research” it is time for action. I said to him, I agree with you sir, it is time for action and I sent him another letter, come with me on the farms and let us take action of these perpetrators of the injustice against my people, never heard from him again.”* When speaking about the statement made by Van Rensburg to send out police to protect the workers, Nosey laughs and says that the minister should go see a doctor. He believes the provincial government and its DA leaders could have done more. The report he mentions in his interview shall be discussed in the following chapter. This section of the chapter outlines findings acquired through secondary research methods.

4.1.2 “Farm Worker Voices, Reflections of Worker Conditions on South African Farms”

This section summarises the findings given by two reports that were presented by BAWUSA. The first report was written in June 2011, as an account to expose the terrible conditions on some of the grape farms in the WC. The second was written in 2013 as part of BAWUSA’s contractual obligation to DAFF (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries). It is a presentation of research done on the Conditions of Farms Post R105, 00. These reports are a useful factor for this dissertation as they function as evidence to the problems that existed before the strikes and exist after the strikes despite the monetary increase. The reports are a good indication of some of the causes of the strikes that are highlighted by Nosey, Tony Ehrenreich, PASSOP and the farm workers. The conditions on the farms have changed, and some express that things may have been better before the strikes due to the new penalties introduced by farmers.

The first study, “Farm Worker Voices, Reflections of Worker Conditions on South African Farms” sampled 65 farms in the Western Cape and makes the claim that farm workers are the most vulnerable group in South African Society and that farmers are responsible for almost every aspect of their lives (2011:2). It notes that this group of people has a history of human rights violations such as illegal evictions, unfair dismissals, assaults, rape and even murder (2011:2). The report states other social problems such as alcohol abuse, TB, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, unemployment, foetal alcohol syndrome and a range of others. Some of these matters are thus considered civil matters and the perpetrators are released with ‘a mere slap on the wrist’ (2011:2). The report follows to highlight some key events such as the evictions and the nature of housing in some of the poor rural settlements. An example is made of Ertjieskloof where 7 families were housed under the same roof with no walls to separate them. Although there are laws and regulations in place such as ESTA (Eviction and Security Tenure Act) and the Sectoral Determination for Agricultural workers, these laws are not well abided by and farmers find loop-holes.

The research was limited to Western Cape agricultural farms but not specific to any particular type. The percentage results are presented by number of employees of the total sample.

Table1: Summarised Table of Findings: Farm Worker Voices June 2011

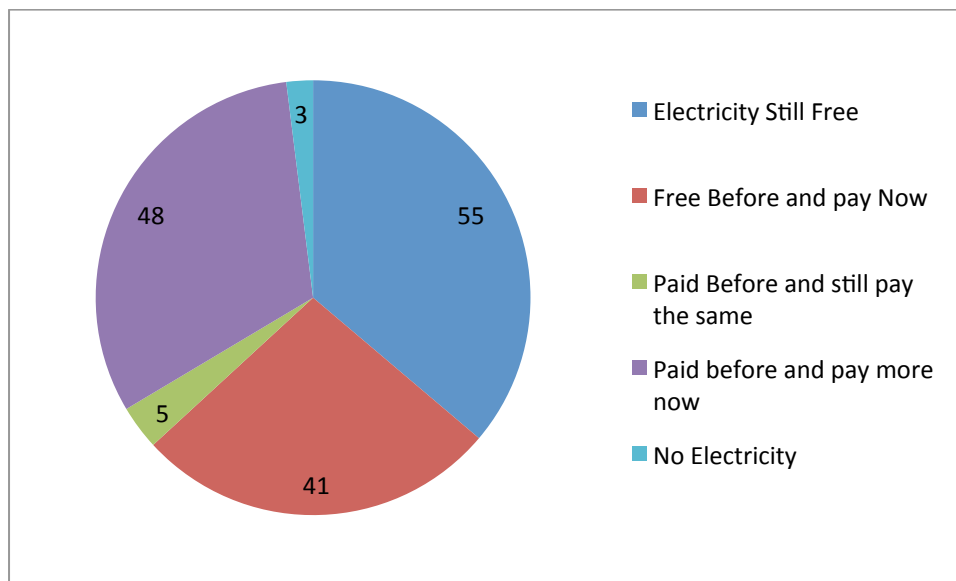
#	Question:			
1	Gender Composition:	64% males	36% females	
2	Does the Farmer provide relevant tools for working?	29% NO	22% Not Sure	49% YES

3	Does the framer provide clothing?	46% NO	8% Not Sure	46% YES
4	Do workers receive safety training and education?	57% No	9% Not Sure	34% YES
5	Do workers have the freedom to join a trade union?	25% NO	1% Not Sure	74% YES
6	Does a Trade union have ready access to the workers?	42% NO	3% not Sure	55% YES
7	Is there a grievance procedure or complaints box for the workers?	58% NO	25% No Sure	17% YES
8	Are workers allowed to bargain collectively?	46% NO	6% Not Sure	48% YES
9	Do workers sign a written contract?	36% NO	35% Not Sure	29% YES

An important point to note is number 7, the ability to express a grievance empowers workers and allows for open dialogue, 58% of the workers do not have this option and thus are disempowered. Although 74% of the workers are able to freely join trade unions, only 55% of the unions are able to freely access their members. Of the 65 farms sampled, only 29% of farm workers signed contracts of employment.

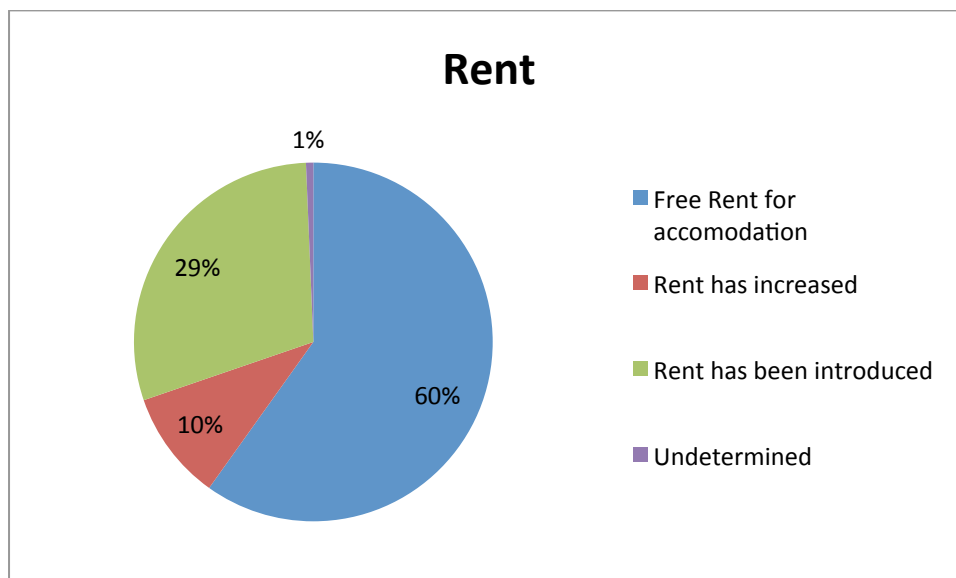
“Conditions on the Farms post R105, 00 Per Day”.

BAWUSA stands for BAWSI Agricultural Workers Union of South Africa which presented a report. The research done was on 152 farms and this report focused on the consequences and results after the wage increase.

Figure 2: Electricity Study Post R105, 00

Conditions on the farms post R105.

The graph above shows that of the 152 farms interviewed, 41 used to have free electricity but now have to pay. The second group to experience a change in the electricity costs is 31.5% of the farms who now have to pay an increased amount from what they used to pay. Although these two figures are high, a little more than half of the farms sampled still have free electricity.

Figure 3: Rent Post R105/day

The second graph depicts the rent situation on the farms. 39.4% of the farms have either increased rent or introduced it in comparison to the 59.8% who continue to provide free housing of the farms that were surveyed.

The above graphs display the two main elements discussed in the BAWUSA reports, other issues that were asked include, using delaying tactics to keep unions out, farmers deducting monies without permission of worker, no ablution facilities and workers were verbally abused. The number of farms where this was the case were no more than 15. Although it does not present a significant result, it is important to note that the workers have a range of non-wage related issues that cause discontent.

4.2 COSATU: Tony Ehrenreich

As per recommendation by Tony Ehrenreich, the interview used for this section is from his interview done for *New Agenda* conducted by Ben Turok. Ben Turok interviewed him in January 2013 and this rich interview revealed COSATU's involvement and position in the strikes.

Tony Ehrenreich on COSATU, Unions and other non-union groups:

COSATU was called in on the 3rd day of the strikes where they first flared up in De Doorns that was the better organised area. COSATU, along with the CCMA facilitated high level negotiations between government, Agri SA and the various farm worker organisations. COSATU functioned as the voice that initiated the suspensions during the strike and was the biggest union name that was involved in terms of power. Other unions and non-union radical groups were involved, such as BAWUSA, FAWU (which is an affiliate of COSATU), PASSOP, Mawubuye and Sikhula Sonke.

Each group approached the strikes with their own viewpoints and strived to drive their agendas as they saw best for the workers. Tony Ehrenreich comments that the unions were at different points.

Evidence of this is seen in two cases;

COSATU advised that the strikes be called off as a means to allow negotiations with Agri SA to gain momentum and to provide the workers with more time to better organise themselves. This arrangement had two main aims, firstly, to create an environment that reduced violence and tensions between the disorganised workers and secondly to bring relief to the workers and families who were on the verge of starving as they were not receiving any income. During the final suspension, "some of the smaller unions asked that we exclude the towns where they felt they were strong, because they could exert further pressure from below" (2013:28). Although the other unions had this view, they finally agreed with COSATU to suspend the strikes.

The second case that is evident of the different views shared by these groups is illustrated by the more radical organisations, like Mawubuye and Sikhula Sonke who believed that the right approach was a political one. They argue that the 1994 settlement has not fully brought about the social

justice and the transformation that was intended and this is particularly the case on the farms. These groups were using this situation to propagate their views (2013:27).

The interview exposes some honest revelations about COSATU as a union, and the problems it faces organisationally. Mr Tony Ehrenreich concedes that, “there is some structural deficiency within COSATU in the manner in which we collate information and respond. I think we don’t coordinate enough and we have got to do that more coherently so that we will be better able to respond to the challenges affecting workers” (2013:25). He believes that as a union, there is difficulty in coordinating between affiliates and the federation which results in a fracture in the structure of the organisation. The union centre is further at odds with its affiliates because when it comes to issues of leadership within COSATU, the federation and its affiliates lack coherence because some unions want autonomy in some matters. The disagreement occurred when some affiliates felt that COSATU is aligned with different factions and this often results in COSATU leadership having less power to intervene.

The groups opposed COSATU on some points as they have different worldviews but they did not undermine or disrupt the strikes or COSATU’s cause. They were a source of useful voices and added a key dimension to the campaign that showed strength in many of the towns that COSATU and other organisations could not gain access to. He states that, “it was the coming together of different organisations around an extremely difficult situation. That we could stay united and avoid violence between different organisations and make some progress on the wage issue indicates the relative success of the campaign” (2013:28).

Mr Ehrenreich asserts that many workers want to be a part of COSATU but makes note that “only 6% of workers are organised in unions, and probably only 2% are FAWU (Food and Allied Workers Union) members (2013:25). With this low representation, COSATU and its affiliates are not directly in touch with those workers and is thus not directly in touch with the real conditions on the ground. The way in which they keep informed is through unions which are engaged in company agreements and in those areas they push for higher wages. He believes it is in places where workers are not organised that poverty has been escalating and strike options have been brewing for a while.

The Strikers: In identifying the striking group, Mr Ehrenreich outlines the reasons and causes for the strike. It was a cross-section of the rural communities, the first group being that of the permanent workers who shared the overarching grievances: low wages, the conditions on farms, evictions, slave master relations. The second group, seasonal workers, “were facing low wages, and labour broking

abuse, as well as the desperate conditions in the informal communities where they live. There are also difficulties of the unemployed workers and poverty-stricken community members.

About 15 to 20% were permanent workers. The majority were seasonal and workers who are unemployed and live in these communities (2013:26).

Violence: The protestors were not just employed farm workers but, as mentioned above, they were combined with the unemployed farm dwellers in the community. The violent nature of the strikes was fuelled by historical feud between farm owners, farm workers and farm communities. “It’s the tension of the historical conflict in those regions that led to the violence” (2013:27).

The actions were a way to vent this anger. Some ways in which people vented was through withdrawal of labour, others chose to set things on fire. He states uncertainty to who the blame falls to but recognises that desperation was high.

Violence was exacerbated by the fact that the farmers were bussing people in from the outside and this prevented the workers from stopping productions and weakened the strikes. The workers’ desperation will see violence come out in these sorts of situations. There was tension between the scab labour, the striking workers and the workers that were not in support of the strikes. The nature of the situation encouraged anger. The farmers further instigated the violence by hiring private security companies who treated the workers brutally.

Violence is also aggravated particularly in South Africa because of the “historical legacy of apartheid and the inability of the country to address the land question in a meaningful way” (2013:27). This violence is a show of anger that has been in existence for the past 20 years.

Tension between locals and Migrants:

The seasonal workers consist of a mix between locals and migrants. Ehrenreich identifies the locals as coloured people (for lack of a better word) who have historically lived in the back yards of these farms and have moved into the informal settlement. Other groups are people from outside the town as far as Eastern Cape and the foreign nationals from Lesotho and other countries.

He asserts that at the moment when they came out, there was some tension but during this particular strike, “they managed to maintain a good sense of unity among themselves around this battle for better wages and better conditions of employment” (2013:26).

He further states that there were attempts made by farmers to promote divisions. The farmers and the local police collaborated to repatriate undocumented workers. These attempts however where

not fruitful and in one incident local and documented workers stood outside the police station and demanded that these undocumented workers be released.

Farmers and Agri SA: As was mentioned before, there is a historic hostility between the farmers and farmer workers, and this continues to include the issue of the black/white relations as well as the land issue. Tony Ehrenreich purports, “good relations between farmers and workers are the exceptions, but they do give hope in the respect of what is possible” (2013:26). He continues, Agri SA’s wishes to maintain status quo; the reason they refused to open any discussions with anyone is because they realise that the conversation will not cease at wages. It will result in making concessions about land reform and the standard conditions on the farms. Agri SA is ready to represent their constituencies when they want greater market access or funds from the government. This strikes shocked farmers and there was a divide as some of the farmers broke out and made public statements. Although they do not want to negotiate, they realise that the environment has to change and this is something the provincial government should work with (2013:28).

During the negotiations, although changes have to be made to the minimum wage, considerations had to be made to accommodate what different farms can afford. However, “farmers are under some illusion that they can defend the status quo by force in the face of these unhappy communities” (2013:30).

Western Cape Government’s involvement: Tony Ehrenreich does not believe the government did all it could to quell the situation. This was a state where political intervention was necessary because the government, unlike the unions, could have forced Agri SA to sit down and engage. The government could have put pressure on Agri SA through threats of reduced subsidies and trade agreements which would have inspired the farmers to finally sit down and seek a viable solution. When the MEC for agriculture (who is a farmer himself) and the Premier first came to speak, they approached the farmers first and then proceeded to speak to the workers. The workers chased them away and this was a show of the alliances that were at play. Tony Ehrenreich states that the DA (the ruling party in the WC) was on the side of the farmer and taking up the issues of the bosses and the ANC is the one that is representing the workers (2013:32). Unlike the ANC, the DA showed that it is on the capitalists’ side rather than labour and the upcoming elections will show the groundswell of opposition to the DA in the poorer rural communities (2013:32). In this interview Mr Ehrenreich does not express a difference between political party and state.

4.3 Western Cape Government: Mr Danie Niemand

Mr Niemand, Director of Farm Worker Development Programme in the Western Cape Government's agricultural department and was very supportive in sharing his invaluable thoughts and experiences as a representative of this department. He provided some useful documents which bring to light the events and projects that the government is involved in with regards to the farm workers in the agricultural sector of the Western Cape. The following themed paragraphs express his opinions.

Trade Unions and worker relationship: There is a lack of farm workers that want to belong to unions; this is because workers want an organisation that can actually assist with salaries and disputes, and the working conditions, but that also appeal to social responsibility. He finds that workers generally want a softer approach; they are a religious group of people and are part of many religious organisations (2013:4). This implies that organisations such as unions which can often be affiliated to a political party or involvement, do not appeal to farm workers. The second reason for a lack of union membership is the fees, "very little farm workers can afford the membership fees of the unions, I'm not sure what is the membership now but the last time, that was about 3 or 4 years ago, it was almost R40 a month and I think it is much higher now. That is a big problem" (2013).

Politics: Minister Van Rensburg states in a report that the strikes were not a matter of labour unrest but an issue that was politically motivated. Danie Niemand agrees, to a large extent. He (2013) states, *"you see unfortunately there is also a lot of politics involved around this strikes. I am a government official and I can't get involved in that but I am not blind and we were not even part...of...I think it was Feb 12 last year, there was a conference in Paarl where deputy president was Motlanthe and a lot of other cabinet ministers"*. Mr Niemand points to other examples which show the exclusion of the W.C govt in matters revolving the strike. He points out that the issue only occurred in the Western Cape and not any other region. Had it not been a political issue should the strikes not have occurred in other areas where there are poorer living conditions on the farms?

Relationship with Nosey Pieterse: The W.C government's relationship with Nosey Pieterse is of a tentative nature. Danie Niemand admits that he personally had a good relationship with him and the government funded some of Nosey's projects (not as much as the ANC). This relationship was cordial until 2009 when the new government came into power and Nosey's engagements with the office just stopped. He follows to give an example of an encounter between Nosey and minister van Rensburg, which is similar to the one told by Nosey about the June 2011 report but with different outcomes.

He says “yeah, yeah. He also sort of brought a report shortly after the Human Watch report in August 2011; he brought out a report which was quite a good report. There was nothing wrong with the report and the minister Van Rensburg asked him if they could meet and discuss the allegations in that report and he did not pitch up the first time for the meeting and then they arranged another meeting and he did not pitch up for that one and then there was a third appointment which he also didn’t pitch up. So the minister wrote him a letter and said sorry and that’s it. So, immediately there was a resistance once the DA government came into power in 2009 in the WC. It shouldn’t be like that...but I mean...and unfortunately you can....you see, he said...he is the voice of the farm workers but out of 200,000 plus workers in the WC only about 5 to 7000 are members of BAWUSA which is a very very small percentage” (2013).

Farm workers are not a vulnerable group:

Niemand states that in terms of salary and income, farm workers are not vulnerable because they are far from the end of the poverty line. He identifies three groups of farm workers, the ones who have jobs as permanent or seasonal workers constitute the first two groups. These are the groups that the department of agriculture primarily focuses on as they are legal employees. The third group, he sees as a grey area because they are the dwellers on the farms that do not necessarily work on the farms but live there. He identifies these as the ones that could be recognised as vulnerable as they have no income. He notes that often these the first aforementioned groups are grouped together with the third and are all classified by society as vulnerable.

Western Cape Farm Worker of the Year Competition

The Western Cape Government hosts a completion every year, in order to acknowledge the important contributions of the farmers to the growth of South African agricultural sector. There are several categories, General Worker, Tractor Driver, Administrative Personnel, and Animal Production. Technical Operator, Irrigation Specialist, Social Development, Junior Management, Middle Management, Senior Management. The Hex Valley Table Grape Association initiated the competition in 2002 in the Hex Valley. It grew from 36 entries in the Hex Valley in 2002 to the participation of 15 districts with 887 entries in 2012. Shoprite began to support the competition financially in 2012 and Shoprite and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture are now co-sponsors of the competition (Niemand, 2013). The winners of the competition receive money as a reward and become part of the Prestige Farm Worker Forum which is a group given a direct line to Minister van Rensburg if ever they have issues on the farms.

4.4 PASSOP: Owen Maromo

NGO Engagement

PASSOP (People against Suffering Oppression and Poverty) is a human rights NGO devoted to fighting for the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants in South Africa (PASSOP.co.za, 2013). Their involvement in the strikes mainly aimed at monitoring the relations between the locals and the foreign migrants. This was because there was still high apprehension of danger after the 2008 and 2009 xenophobic attacks.

Prior to the strikes, PASSOP held several events and meetings with the various national groups. One of the events was a healing ceremony, that involved the slaughtering of a sheep as they reflected on a previous attack between local Sotho and Zimbabweans 5 years ago (passop.co.za,2013). Thousands attended, including locals, Sothos and Zimbabweans. Their efforts were fruitful, during the 2012 farm worker strikes and protests, tensions between migrants, locals were at their lowest, and this is partly due to the work done by PASSOP.

PASSOP activist Owen Maromo relays that the first strike initiated on a farm with a majority of women workers. After the death of the farm owner, SAFE, a labour broker took over and drastically altered the arrangements on the farms to the disadvantage of the workers. The workers were receiving less pay, longer hours and others retrenched. PASSOP coordinated a strategy to educate the women about strikes (including awarding certificates), ensured they joined a union (FAWU) and that they abided by the laws. The strike was successful and upon hearing this, other farms decided to strike, however the second strike was highly unorganized and resulted in the violence and destruction of property.

Despite the success PASSOP experienced with the initial farm worker strike, Owen Maromo stated that PASSOP would not want to work with the other bodies involved in the strike. FAWU was the union that the NGO was affiliated with, but during the strike the union was sidelined by the more prominent BAWUSA. Owen Maromo (2013) explained in his interview that “the workers felt betrayed. COSATU under Tony, was meant to support FAWU (Food and Allied Workers Union), that was the arrangement but he chose to buddy up with Nosey who has his own political plans. PASSOP had to make posters to inform people that BAWUSA was not associated with FAWU. It was confusing for them”. This distrust for BAWUSA was amplified when BAWUSA refused to call off the strikes; this was to the detriment of the workers as some of them were now struggling to feed their families. Maromo’s opinion stands that the union BAWUSA, ‘promised too much’ and does not appreciate the

plight of the farm worker as those who work and dwell on the farms. He expressed that after promising the workers R150, it was now up to PASSOP to 'pick up the pieces'.

Owen Maromo strongly declares that the challenges faced by unions in representation are due to their own barriers. He boasts that he and Braam Hanekom "recruited 600 members into FAWU in one day" and that COSATU and its unions are not doing enough to recruit workers in the agricultural sector where unionization is needed the most. An important group that requires unionization is the foreign migrant workforce that suffers as farmers take advantage of them because they are undocumented. If the workers complain, not only are they at risk of losing their jobs, but face legal arrests. There is a need for new and targeted strategies to reach out to the migrant workforce and unionize them.

4.5 Farm workers:

The view supported by BAWUSA and COSATU that many workers want to join unions did not mirror the interviews with the farm workers. The respondents did not show an aversion to unions, but rather a lack of knowledge about their role and necessity. There was an expressed impression that trade unions were there to 'take care of worker issues' but this was stated as an abstract understanding of their responsibility and did not directly include them. The explanation given by one of the workers for not joining was that as seasonal workers, they feel no need to join a union because they could change employers in the following season if they are unhappy with the one they have. Three of the 7 respondents were unionised, all were permanent workers on their farms.

Two of the respondents joined FAWU, through the involvement of PASSOP, as she and her husband are employees on the farm that initiated the strikes. The wife proudly showed off their certificates having passed the training provided by PASSOP before strike. The training instructed them on legal ways to conduct a strike. Of the 7 respondents, 5 had heard of PASSOP, all had heard of and COSATU and less than 4 were certain they knew about BAWUSA.

The workers admitted that they had all marched in the strike but most felt it was due to pressure. One interviewee responded, "You have to follow the crowd, they told us they would burn our house down so you just go". The respondents were unsure of the 'leaders' in the strikes but were cognizant of the pressure that surrounded them to join the march. Although they participated and agreed with strike action as a form of negotiation, the workers showed they are against the violence. The violence made it difficult for others (who were able) to go to work because entrances were blocked.

The seasonal workers felt they really needed to go to work during the strike and were troubled that a resolution was not being met soon enough. The non-permanent workers, work from October to

April and it is only in this time that they earn. One of the couples interviewed have a household of ten and only three of the residents work. When it is not season, they 'sit at home' and have no means of income during that time. A lengthy strike is detrimental to their long-term budget; hence, many workers wished the strike would end quickly.

The workers confirmed that although there had been tension between the locals and the migrants, it has greatly dissipated and they find means to work well with each other.

When questioned about the provincial governments Farm Worker Competition, 6 of the respondents claimed to not know about it but one man said he may have read about it in a newspaper but was unsure.

In contradiction to popular thought the interviews that some workers do have decent working experiences and relationships with the farm owners although under different circumstances. The workers interviewed do not live on the farms and this fact greatly alters experiences. 3 of the respondents admitted that they have heard that there are some other workers who are suffering consequences after the R105/ day was set but they have not, this is because they live off the farms. They are very appreciative of the money increase and find it beneficial. Although they did not get the R150 they initially set out to attain, they are grateful for the increase. They do make notice of the reality that those that live on the farms may be suffering worse than before the change, because now they are being charged for items they never used to pay for.

Contradicting the findings shown by the BAWUSA study, a married farm worker couple admitted that they have good relationship with the owner. When they have problems they feel free to take them up with the owner of the farm. During the strike, on the occasions that the workers made it to work, the farmer gave them food. He claims, "he [the owner] was very understanding and said if you see that your life was in danger you can stay." The couple believes that this sort of treatment is not limited to their farm but is shared on most of them.

Differences: The two married couples interviewed showed minor differences in their experiences. The migrant Zimbabwean couple, who were both permanent workers, were part of the group that was displaced in the 2009 attacks in De Doorns. They expressed their experience with an unexpected humour, as they admitted that they stayed on the sports field for a year but were not unhappy. This was because many NGOs came to help and provided them with free accessories that they had accepted to live without. They received food, towels and bedding as well as their wages. Although they were housed in tents, they felt comfortable leaving their belongings when they went to work

because there was no theft. During the strike period, they did not experience any trouble from the local South African farm workers, everyone worked well in order to fight for their rights.

The wife, who works on the farm where the strikes were initiated, admitted that she did not attempt to speak up during the initial strike because she feared she would lose her job as some of her fellow workers had. The couple both expressed an appreciation for the increase in money. The reasons for this appreciation differed from that of the local couple; their main priority was to be able to send some money home (Zimbabwe) at least once in a few months. When asked about their future, they articulated a hope to be able to go back to Zimbabwe and start 'something' of their own.

The local couple was very positive about their farm owner. They both showed awareness for the tensions between foreign migrant workers and the locals but they personally do not discriminate. The husband expressed his opinion that most people are just looking for a way to live, it is best to work together. They too, were pleased with the increase but admitted that their experiences differ from those of the resident farm workers.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Discussion and Conclusion

The dissertation emphasizes the importance of understanding diversity in situations of conflict. Previous studies on diversity in social groups in South Africa have often been delineated along racial lines, neglecting the significance that other forms of diversity hold in conflict conditions. Oberschall's theory of Empirical Analysis of Action precisely identifies the truism that was reflected in this study; there is a complex interaction between influences and personal predispositions, and these bear an impact on the outcomes of choices made by individuals. Using Oberschall's (1973:17) logic, it is evident in this dissertation that 'broader cultural trends, historical traditions and differences between communities' when entered into analysis, have a significant impact on processes and action.

Nosey Pieterse and Tony Ehrenreich comment that the tensions between the migrants and the foreigners are existent. The locals feel that the migrants are willing to work for far less pay, which undermines their own wages. The xenophobic attack on Zimbabweans in 2009 is evidence of this contempt.

The unity of all the farm workers was threatened by the tradition of discrimination (against foreigners) and this difference in nationalities was used by farmers to weaken the strike by having the undocumented workers arrested. At this point, the labour movement could have responded in two different ways. The first would have been to support the arrests of the hundreds of undocumented migrants and expectedly so because of the history between the two groups. Consequently, more employment opportunities would be available to the locals as there are fewer migrants 'stealing their jobs'. The second response, which was adopted by the striking workers, was to march to the police station and demand that the foreign migrant workers be released.

The differences between these communities could have altered the results of the situation. The tension between the workers bore potential to be a trigger for worse violence but in this case, the unity of all workers rose against capitalism. This result contradicts Oberschall's theory of 'Institutional Strengths and Weaknesses' which claims that societies that are heterogeneous in nature, ethnically, racially, religiously and so forth are more likely to be violent in situations of conflict (1973:64).

Dissertation findings show otherwise, although the workers comprised of various groups, which were a possible source of contention, their differences were undermined for a greater common cause; the fight for higher wages and living and working conditions. This shows that in societies that are heterogeneous in nature, likelihood of violence is not determined by the composition of the diverse groups but rather by the strength of their resolve for their cause.

The 'complex interaction between influences and predispositions' is not limited to individuals, but as this dissertation brings to attention, institutional diversity and the interactions between various representative groups bears a strong impact on their actions and results in a conflict environment.

These representative groups, as aptly stated by Webster et al (2003) are formed to advance workers' collective interests and to regulate the inequality of power relations in the work place between employees and employers in a way that is beneficial to the unions' members. The common goal identified is the need for the groups to fight for worker rights. Each of the groups in this study portrayed this aim but this objective is marred by the existence of other co-existing interests. Through an understanding of the involvement of PASSOP, BAWUSA, COSATU and the Western Cape Government it is evident that the workers are not adequately represented. Each group bears a different focus and this mandates how they approach their responsibilities.

In response to the strike, and with the objective of constructively adding and bringing a different dimension to the various agrarian studies in progress (CAS and SPP), this thesis paid particular attention to the role of the worker representative bodies involved in the strike and questions their articulation, understanding and true level of representation for the South African grape farm workers. The study revealed that a relationship exists between the trade unions and NGOs, their institutional agendas and the representation that workers receive.

5.1.2 Diversity and Representation of Worker Grievances

The dissertation confirms McCarthy and Zald's (2006) assertion (as concluded by the resource Mobilization (RM) theory) that mobilization occurs due to frustration and deprivation. The 2012 strike and protests marked a historic moment in the agricultural sector. The workers found a way to fight and express their grievances and have their voices heard. Some commentators and observers consider it a revolution as it initiated a change in an industry that still functions within the skeletal structures of apartheid. The Hex Valley region is scattered with poor settlements which are characterized by shanty houses and often more than one family per house as was seen in Erjtieskloof in 2011. These areas are subject to poor sanitation; inconsistent service delivery and are at a high risk of child malnutrition (Ehrenreich: 2013). COSATU's Tony Ehrenreich expresses that it is a "life

and death struggle” for the people in these areas as they are subject to such deep levels of unhappiness and poverty and no prospects of escaping this situation at the moment. With the level of poor living conditions that are experienced, the workers wish for more money as they earn very little in comparison to what is required to live a decent healthy life. The above named reasons triggered the desperation in the people to strike and fight back as outlined by the RM theory. The unions and NGOs stand to represent these workers against these problems and ardently seek solutions. However, the practices of these representative bodies are based on the assumption of a predictable monolithic workforce, whereas the workforce reality is that of unpredictability.

There are several groups of workers and as the findings show, each group experiences varying conditions. Not all farm workers are subject to the detrimental living and working conditions that are established in the studies done by BAWUSA of the 152 farms in the Western Cape Province. The permanent workers in this thesis expressed an understanding of the tribulations that other workers may face but admitted that they were pleased with their living conditions. The field work reflected a key finding, which illuminates how situations are altered due to diversity of components. The first is that permanent workers generally are satisfied with conditions of employment, although they would appreciate the extra money; their action to strike was not driven by desperation. This confirms Oberschall’s (1973:17) notion that pressure one feels from the group in making a decision is the result of influence. It is the information they (the individual) receive, restraints and rewards that ultimately lead them to join the collective. As one of the respondents stated, he had to join the march because they threatened to burn his house down. In this instance, it is because of the high pleas of one group (the seasonal workers living on farms) that an entire province of workers put down their tools.

This is a show of the importance of utilizing and understanding diversity in conflict, the strike could have had a different more peaceful outcome, although this remains a hypothetical. The group that was suffering the most was the seasonal workers living on the farms. The strike could have had an alternative more peaceable outcome because worker grievances differ. Instead of the representative bodies adopting an approach that generalized the workforce; efforts could have been made to reduce the conflict from a provincial level to a farm by farm negotiation. Strategically targeting the group with the greatest problems and seeking ways to legally and peacefully address them before they erupted into the unorganized provincial violent strike that were witnessed in 2012. By adopting a diversity lens, it is simpler for unions and NGO’s to be more sensitive to issues as they will recognize the source of the problem sooner and take on a preventative stance.

However, there lies a challenge in the above proposed scenario; the percentage of farm workers who are union members is notably low, thus it is difficult for unions to engage with farmers and their workers in reasonable negotiations. Two explanations can help describe why trade unions in the agricultural sector have not been successful in their efforts to unionise farm workers. The first is a combination of reasons which were unearthed during the research and shall be outlined in the following paragraph. The second reason, highly commends the core argument of this dissertation, that institutional diversity negatively affects the representation of workers.

Challenges of representation:

The responsibility of representing and articulating worker grievances is complex, and increased by the lack of farm workers signed up in unions. Of the 65 farms that were interviewed for the *2011 Farm Worker Voices and Reflections* study, 74% of the respondents replied YES, that they do have the freedom to join a trade union, only 25% said NO and 1% was unsure. This information does not logically tally with the statistic that only 6% of the workers in this sector are unionized as they have the liberty to join the unions.

When asked if trade unions have ready access to the workers, 55% of the workers responded YES. This is a moderately low figure, showing that although workers are at liberty to join unions; this may not be an advantage as the unions do not have unrestricted freedom to access the farm workers. 55% however, is still the greater proportion of the farms and thus workers do have the opportunity to join although they may not meet with their unions as often as they please. With these statistics, one would expect a high rate of unionization, but this is not the case. It should be noted however, that the conditions of the interviews for this study are not known, thus results may have been impacted by situations of coercion by farmers or fear by fears to answer truthfully. The study did not cover all the farms in the Western Cape and very little information is known about the communities in these settlements and farms. The Western Cape Government is currently rectifying this by conducting a survey that will provide more information of this demographic. Using the statistics available, it is evident that this sector is under represented by unions.

This lack of representation is also indicative of the workers reluctance to speak out or to be part of a process that involves confronting their employers. This is not unusual as there is a legitimate fear that proactive workers face a high risk of retrenchment if they actively go against the farm owner. A female farm worker respondent admitted that she did not attempt to speak up during the initial strike because she feared she would lose her job as some of her fellow workers had 58% of the

workers said NO, there is no procedure or complaints box for the workers, and this style of management sets a tone that discourages involvement in organizations such as unions.

BAWUSA however experienced an increase in membership from 3000 before the strike, to 6000 during the strike and 10000 afterwards to which Nosey Pieterse states the 6% statistic is not applicable any longer. This is yet to be determined as no survey has been recently done yet to confirm this. Both COSATU and BAWUSA assert that workers want to join unions, the spike in numbers may show this but it is most likely a consequent of the strike inflaming a sense of solidarity among workers to stand up. Had the assertion that workers truly want to join unions been true, these trends would have been visible over time not only in a time of crisis.

The question to ask is 'are the unions doing enough to organize farm workers?' Owen Maromo stated that as PASSOP, they managed to recruit 600 members into FAWU in one day. He sees the failings of representation purely the unions' fault as they do not make real attempts to inform workers about their role and recruit them. This sentiment was echoed in the interviews which showed that although the workers knew about unions, they were very unclear about the exact role these bodies play and had no real interest in finding out. It is the responsibility of the unions to take on a more aggressive stance and actively go farm by farm (if the farmer is willing) and recruit.

This lack of representation limits the workers avenue for expression and thus limits the scope of articulation of ground roots problems by these groups. The problems that are thus articulated are representative of small a small workforce whose ideals are much easier to manipulate. The problems are thus expressed through a lens that best expresses the unions or NGOs' goals for the workers and themselves. One of these influencing agendas that was constantly evident but discussed tentatively was the involvement of politics. This lack of representation could also be the result of the fees associated with union membership, which some workers may feel are high. If they are currently unhappy with their wages, any form of extra financial obligation is unwanted. This adds appeal to the Farm Worker Forum, Rita Andreas introduced as it has no fees associated with it.

This draws the discussion to the second reason for low representation of workers. Institutional diversity affects both the representation of workers in numbers as well as the accuracy by which their grievances are represented. As outlined earlier, the diverse nature of the workforce affects the way in which workers' grievances are understood because they vary. This ideology can be transferred into the understanding of how institutional diversity negatively affects worker representation. Although not overtly evident, the influence of conflicting political alliances impacts the ability for worker representative bodies to function together.

5.1.3 Involvement of politics:

Historically, trade unions' role was mainly of a very political nature as labour was key in advocating for democracy in South Africa. COSATU as a union played an immense role by organizing effective and crippling wage and general strikes and this aided in ending apartheid. The roles of unions have changed over years, and they now vie for national development for workers and their rights. The alliance to political parties however has not been severed and their responsibility of representing worker rights is tainted by this political association. The strike was labelled as politically motivated by PASSOP, Western Cape Government, DA and the media. The Western Cape is not governed by the ANC and a strike of this nature would prove the DA incompetent to rule. Nosey and Tony Ehrenreich both expressed that the DA chooses to protect the farmers over the workers and this sentiment was echoed by workers when they chased the DA ministers and the Premier away from the strike. Despite this occurrence, BAWUSA strongly contends that the strike was not a political issue but about labour. Nosey Pieterse points out that it was working class politics, not party politics. The research however, argues that although the strike was truly an issue about labour unrest and a cry for better working conditions, to a large extent, it carried a distinct political element.

It is important to understand the role of the party politics as they reflect and affect the agendas and actions set out by unions and NGOs and ultimately blemish the genuine intent of representation and articulation of worker grievances.

The strike was political and this is for several reasons. There is a dark mask veiling the truth about political agendas and only inferences can be made from the answers given and through the evidence of circumstances. Although BAWUSA and COSATU deny political involvement, events state otherwise. The most visual example was stated by Owen Maromo who pointed out that during the strike there was distribution of ANC flags and many people were photographed donning ANC t-shirts. The DA being chased away from the scene further affirms the political nature of the strike.

The conditions surrounding the strike present a valid explanation for it taking on a political form. The strike occurred close to a period when elections are to occur in South Africa, this provides great motivation for political parties to use their affiliates to drive their agendas. The second circumstance is seen in the fact that despite that the Western Cape pays the highest wages in the agricultural sector (FRRP, 1996); the strike occurred in this region and nowhere else.

It is mainly because of this finding that institutional diversity is important to study. COSATU's Ehrenreich relays that there are many internal battles in leadership because in some matters, some unions within COSATU are aligned with different factions (2013:25). This creates a point of conflict

for the unions within the centre. He explains that this is a structural weakness as the federation and its associates are not functioning as a united whole for the benefit of the workers. COSATU's affiliate union FAWU had very little involvement in the strike as COSATU worked more closely with BAWUSA, led by an ardent ANC supporter. Nosey Pieterse denies wanting to join the ANC again for a political post despite the general reports and stories that say that he is. During the strike BAWUSA was reluctant to suspend them, at the expense of starving workers. PASSOP commented that this type of circumstance leads workers to shy away as they see Nosey and his organization as using them as a way to gain political favour, rather than truly representing their grievances.

The DA's claim in the media that strike was political is true, as it applies to the Western Cape government too. The provincial government representatives first went to speak to the farmers although in this space it was the workers who needed to be addressed first as they were instigating violence. This action indicates the provincial government's alignment with farmers and producers, and is understandable as they comprise of the provinces ruling party's main support base.

In an ideal environment, when representing worker problems unions would put the workers 1st and disregard the influence of politics. Had politics not played a role in the strikes, the situation could have shown a different result. Had the Premier and her ministers been allowed to address the workers, a more effective form of dialogue could have occurred instead of the violent throwing of bricks. Without politics playing a prominent role, unions increase the potential to work with other organisations. Hence, instead of an alliance of COSATU and BAWUSA formed on political commonality, PASSOP and other NGOs are encouraged to collaborate for the betterment of worker representation and conflict resolution.

The above scenario is a hypothetical and highly improbable thus, the involvement of politics should not be treated as a taboo topic or negative as it shall continue to exist. Instead it must be embraced and the diversity used to the benefit of the workers in seeking solutions. The Western Cape government bears sway and power over farmers as they are responsible for their grants and trade agreements and the COSATU (aligned with the ANC) has the support of the 'people'. Using this, the government and COSATU along with other unions, should speak to their respective supporters and vie to bring an end to the crisis and volatile situation, and settle for a calmer form of negotiations through them. This would prove to be a more effective form of communication and consequently less chances of dangerous strike action. This is a case where diversity of the institutions can be used for the benefit of the farm workers; however, reality proves that this difference is also the cause for mistrust between representative bodies.

5.1.4 Poor communication and distrust:

In line with one of the assertions made by this dissertation that the varying values within institutions affects the probability of effective communication in conflict, the research revealed a scenario that occurred between Nosey Pieterse and Minister Van Rensburg which exemplifies mistrust between representative bodies. Nosey Pieterse's visits to the Western Cape government offices stopped when the DA came in power in the Western Cape (Niemand: 2013). The interviews exposed a situation where Nosey Pieterse wrote to the Minister about the situations on the farms in 2011 and to Nosey, this letter was never responded. The agricultural office notes receipt of the letter but asserts that after three attempts at trying to organize a meeting with Nosey, he never showed up. There now, exists a surly working relationship between the two and both believe that the other is not making the right efforts to assist and represent the workers. This paper shall not claim a truth but it is imperative that these diverse groups find a way to work together. This situation is an example of the suspicious nature that is created between groups and because of this, dialogue between these bodies is weakened and not as productive. It affects the conditions necessary to find a viable solution to the farm workers problems.

Lack of communication hinders a good understanding of issues at hand. In this case, it masks some pertinent issues about the strikes, such as the fact that it was not solely a wage issue. As illustrated by the BAWUSA "Post R105 per day" study, after the increase there was no real significant change for the better. If the various bodies worked together to understand the situations on the farms, it would show that an increase in wages, only disadvantages the farmer greatly and slightly aids the workers but is not the solution. There is a graver issue at hand, which was evident by the joining of unemployed farm dwellers in the protest action. The communities in these poor areas are riddled with unemployment, poverty and appalling living conditions. In a meeting held at the Premiers house (2013) with ministers and farm workers, it became apparent that some of the issues people face are to do with level of living conditions. They sought solutions to road issues to ensure that their children get to school safely and other services. Permanent workers were a smaller percentage of striking body because they are generally privy to better living conditions. Security provided by a safe and protected home, with clean ablution facilities and running water creates a more pleasant environment. If some of these issues were rectified and standards were enforced on all the farms through government assistance and coordination and cooperation by unions, workers would have less aggression and need to strike. Wages would thus now solely be allocated to daily expenses rather than ways to deal with poor conditions of living. Lack of communication is not a direct cause for misrepresentation of worker problems but a correlation is evident. If there was better

communication between representative bodies, workers would have a conducive, trusting environment and an avenue to express their grievances, work related and otherwise.

5.1.5 Media influence

This section draws on the theories by Stuart Hall and Stanley Cohen on the role and influence of the media in conflict situation. It is necessary to incorporate this understanding in this dissertation as it elucidates how media shapes our information or misinformation. Media houses bear varying ideals and thus, what is reported and seen as the ultimate 'truth' is a reflection of a manufactured opinion. Chomsky's (2010) *Manufacturing Consent* theory shows how all facets of the news are structured by the few elitists in power and reflects their opinions. This is in agreement with Cohen's (1972) notion of 'deviance amplification' which states that disruption in social order is often intensified by the media or reinforced by the parties with their own interests. The incidents and press releases done by Western Cape officials, Nosey Pieterse and COSATU strongly present their institutional positions on the matters of the strike.

Cohen's Moral Panics can be directly applied to the South African situation when studying the 2012 Western Cape strikes. As mentioned in chapter one, the visual media work as an instrument to shape and create the representation of the "reality" that occurs in protests. The gruesome images seen on the front pages of newspapers and online articles fabricate a reality often alternate to the actuality of the situation. The written media's job is to tell an objective story, however this is often not a possibility.

The media have a difficult role as they often have to juggle contesting views. Such as "workers insist the strike is about wages and service delivery vs. a result of constrained livelihood circumstances; while farmers, farmer organisations and some politicians insist wages are not really at issue and the strikes are 'politically motivated' (i.e. instigated by political parties) or resulting from tensions between Lesotho and Zimbabwe migrant workers" (Pointer, 2013:7). It is in these instances that agendas are pushed through by different bodies involved through speeches, press releases and public events and actions which shall be reported.

Thus the meaning of a strike is assigned by the media, through the production of images and the way in which information by role players is reported. It is this representation that produces meaning; a sympathetic media frame creates and fixes the identity of the farm worker as a victim. Pointer (2013:16) states that this view "re-inscribes the 'victims' as having a fixed identity and fixed social relations — at odds with the rupture caused by the strike. The use of the sympathy frame ignores the 'agency component' of strikers' actions, thus erasing the possibility of a new farm worker

identity – one in which farm workers have seized social power, become stronger collectively and have the possibility of demanding new social relations.” The media assign meaning to action play a catalyst role in binding and affirming the positions taken by the key role players in conflict.

In Stuart Halls *Policing the Crisis*, moral panics are mitigated and accentuated by institutions in power to create public support for a need to ‘police the crisis’. Each institute has its diverse interests which are presented and represented to the world through the media. In this myriad of voices, the voice of the farm worker is lost or misrepresented. The media’s role in these situations of conflict is to be considered, as questioned by Friedman, are the strikes as serious as they are reported? Are they about to destroy South African economy? A much deeper analysis is needed to fully address this question but which is not within the scope of this minor dissertation. This complex web of interactions increases the difficulty in effective communication but understanding the existence of the different dimensions brought about by diversity marks the first step in acquiring industrious solutions for the farm workers. This will increase representation.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Opportunities

The farm worker strike presents an opportunity for change in South Africa. Through the protests, several anxieties about South African social relations on the farms were unearthed and publicized. The distressing living and working conditions of some of the workers, the question of wages and the tensions between locals and migrants and the lack of avenues for grievance expressions for farm workers.

The strikes created a space for fresh academic research on new dimensions of social conflict and conflict resolution by revealing the need to embrace and include the institutional diversity when studying conflict situations. The protests unplugged the apprehension of the violent nature of social conflict in South Africa (so soon after Marikana) and show that further research should be made into exploring the dynamics which result in violent labour strikes, focusing on South African industries.

It is evident that the unions and the NGOs play a useful role in dealing with issues of social conflict but there is still some work to be done in terms of the representation of farm workers.

Limitations

When adopting a qualitative research design greatly reliant on in-depth interviews with key informants, the dissertation has limited ability to fully and effectively explore more role players to exhaustively assess their responsibility in the strikes. A focus group approach could have made for richer and more dimensional findings. This however was the best as it allowed for quicker organization of meetings and presented rich data worth probing...? The loss of data due to theft greatly weakened the argument as research interviews had to be conducted again telephonically, which as a method is not as strong for this type of research. Although there are many points that are applicable and similar to other labour strikes, this thesis cannot be generalized as the sample group is not representative of all the groups and unions that stand for workers. It is not generalisable but it can be used as a benchmark to study other unions and their situations.

The thesis could have acquired richer information with the inclusion of farmers to add to the dimension of voices, but none were available and willing to be interviewed within the timeline of the dissertation.

Possible future of representation?

The labour negotiation space in the wine industry needs to be altered to allow for an environment that fosters good communication between the employers and the employees. After the farm worker protests, on January 18 2013 the National Farm Workers Forum was created by Rita Andreas, an HR farm manager who grew up on the farm she works on. Born from the recognition of the lack of communication avenues for farm workers, the forum provides a space where workers can speak freely about their various grievances and suggest how they would want matters resolved.

The role of the Farm Workers' Forum is to "see that the farmers and the workers adhere to the standards that the government want. The committee decides on what is going on with the farm workers and there is open communication between the farm workers and the farm owners" (Andreas, 2013). Thus, the Forum determines the perception of the situations on the farms as best as they understand them. The Forum ensures that workers have contracts and that the terms of the contacts are being followed. The Forum also hosts a number of events to add some recreational dimension to the farm workers lives such as choir competitions and sports days.

This Forum represents a viable and an excellent method to improve the representation of farm workers in South Africa. Rita purports that only workers working on the farms can truly know what the issues are and for this reason, the forum holds great credibility in worker representation. After

opinions have been voiced, and suggestions made, the unions and NGOs may step in. A farm worker committee member can relay the grievances and proposed suggestions, whilst a farmer relays their concerns to Agri SA as well. The two groups can therefore negotiate with a more informed standing thus reducing the bias of personal agendas, political affiliations and diverse conflicts of interests.

Through the Western Cape Government's Farm Worker of the Year Competition, the reward of a direct line to the minister of agriculture with the winners presents a brilliant opportunity to increase avenues of communication between the government and the workers. The government needs to aggressively advertise this competition so that more farm workers become aware of it.

In seeking the answer to how the complex responsibility of representing and articulating farm workers' problems was negotiated by unions and NGOs, one of the main objectives of this dissertation is to supplement the body of academic research that has recently re-emerged on the land question and agrarian studies.

The dissertation akin to other studies mentioned in the Purpose and Relevance section recognises the need to address the issues of the communities in the farmlands of the Western Cape. Precisely, the difficulty in reconciling different political ideas and a commitment to worker solidarity weakens the union and NGO's efforts in articulating and representing worker grievances. The differences in institutions and their values ultimately affects their representation of worker problems, BAWUSA's tenacious nature to not settle for anything less than R150 blinded them to the immediate sufferings of the farm workers when they refused to suspend the strikes. COSATU's strong association with the ANC causes a clash in ideologies with its unions and with outside organisations that could possibly collaborate with them. The Westerns Cape government's strong relation with the DA resulted in their denial into De Doorns to address the workers.

The unions and NGOs that represent the workers all show the good intention to facilitate social transformation towards the betterment of the workers lives. It is evident however that the various interests expressed by the groups create a chasm that weakens channels to a viable solution. There is mistrust that is in existence among the groups.

Despite some of the shortfalls of the representative groups due to their diverse natures, they remain the sole voices of the farm workers and are on the path to bring about social transformation in the farmlands. Their involvement in the strikes, albeit as separate entities not functioning together prevented the strike from imitating the graveness of the Marikana incident. All the institutions representatives interviewed for this research do not condone violence despite South African history to adopt violent ways to incite change. The involvement of NGOs like PASSOP is crucial in times of

conflict such as this. Their attempts ensured that another dimension of conflict was not included in the strike. This was accomplished by working “hard to ensure that the ongoing and serious documentation problems faced by immigrant workers were not used to divide the community and to make immigrants undermine any workers strike actions. If the community saw Zimbabweans, or immigrants, as undermining the strikes there would have been mass displacement and possibly much bloodshed” (PASSOP.org.za,2013). As enunciated by Oberschall’s concept of *dimensions of social conflict*, this was not a zero-sum result, the workers walked away with an increase in wages and the farmers did not have to the initial concede to the R150, a compromise was met.

Not only is institutional diversity important, but diversity in all its other facets is important to understanding and the betterment of finding solutions in situations of a strike. As was seen, the workers diverse interest played a role had they been understood better or incorporated; they would have been able to resolve the conflict by the adoption of different more proactive actions. When asked what needed to be done to improve the situation, the Western Cape government representative and COSATU both recognized the need for cooperation between bodies. This admission is a start to cooperation in the future. Although not conclusive neither encompassing of all issues, concerns, and solutions and aspirations for the future, this dissertation aims to illuminate the complex milieu in which this actions take place and the difficulty it creates in coming to a peaceful resolution. It is this embrace of differences of institutional ideals that will lead to more effective measure of representing and articulating farm worker grievances in order to prevent protest action as intense as the 2012 strikes. This dissertation adds to the body of academic knowledge on labour conflicts and hopefully opens up space for fresh ways of thinking about farm disputes and new ways to resolve them.

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